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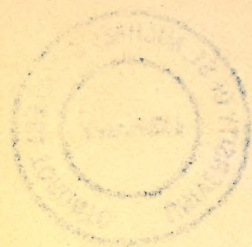
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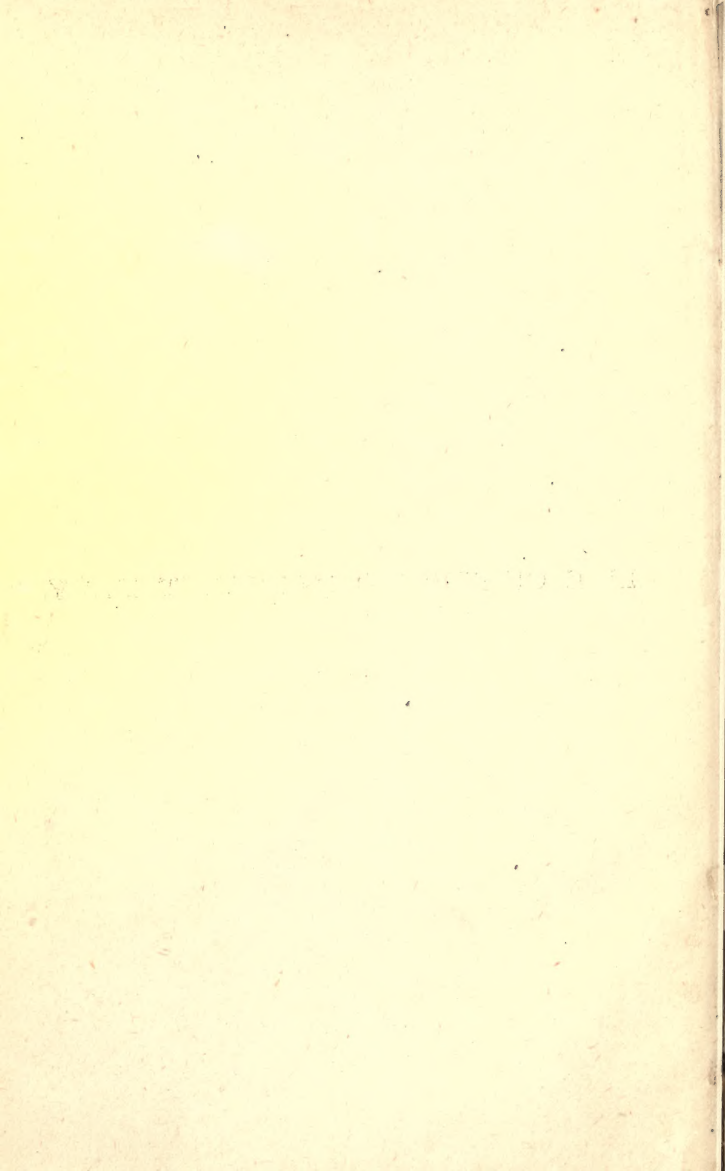




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LIFE OF BLESSED MARGARET MARY.



XXI-2
THE LIFE

OF

BLESSED MARGARET MARY.

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE

Devotion to the Sacred Heart

BY THE

REV. GEORGE TICKELL,

Of the Society of Jesus.

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TO THE
DAUGHTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF SALES
THE ORDER OF THE
VISITATION OF HOLY MARY,
WHOSE LIVES REFLECT FROM THEIR INSTITUTE
THE VIRTUES
Of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
THIS LIFE
OF BLESSED MARGARET MARY,
THE DEPOSITARY OF THE TREASURE OF THE SACRED HEART
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

NOTICE.

THE following Life is based upon the Memoir of her own life written by Blessed Margaret Mary herself at the wish of her Director, Father Rolin, S.J., and on the Life written by the Religious of Paray-le-Monial, her contemporaries. The Life by Monsignor Languet is drawn from the same documents.

The Author desires to acknowledge the obligations he is under to the *Life of Blessed Margaret Mary* by Père Daniel, S.J., and his sense of the kind assistance he has received from the Religious of the Visitation of the Monastery of Westbury.

St. Francis Xavier's, Liverpool.
Feast of St. John Francis Regis, 1869.

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THE LIFE OF BLESSED MARGARET MARY.

CHAPTER I.

1647—1657.

THE life of Blessed Margaret Mary is so identified with the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord, which she was chosen by Him to establish in the Church, that every incident in it borrows all its interest from its connection with that Devotion. The circumstances of her early life serve to show how singularly she was prevented by divine grace, and prepared from her infancy for the privileged mission which she was designed to fulfil.

Margaret was born on the 22d of July, the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen, in the year 1647, at Terrau,* a little village of Charolais, in the

* There is some question regarding the exact birth-place of Blessed Margaret Mary. Both Monsignor Lan-

province of Burgundy, and the diocese of Autun, in France. Her father, M. Claude Alacoque, held a highly respectable position as judge of Terrau and of several of the neighboring manors, a testimony to his acknowledged character

guet and Père Daniel, S. J., in his recent "Life," agree in fixing it at the village of Lauthecourt. The authority upon which they rest is that of M. Chrysostom Alacoque, brother to Blessed Margaret Mary, who, in his "Memoir" of her life, as well as in his deposition made in the process instituted by Bishop Languet, in 1715, names Lauthecourt as her birthplace. The "Life," however, written by the contemporaries of Blessed Margaret Mary, and lately given to the world by the Religious of her own Monastery of Paray-le-Monial, names Terrau as her birthplace. We prefer this authority. For the facts there recorded, treasured up as they would have been with so jealous an interest, were learnt, there is every reason to believe, from the lips of Blessed Margaret Mary herself. The collection of the documents for this "Life" commenced in 1690, the year of her death, and the agreeable task of putting them into form was assigned to two of the Sisters who had been her own Novices, and in whose arms she had expired. Again, Chrysostom Alacoque was but two years older than his sister; his knowledge, therefore, could only have rested upon hearsay. It was after an interval little short of seventy years that Chrysostom made his deposition, in 1715, and it was later still that he wrote his "Memoir." It is not difficult, then, to suppose that he might have been inaccu

for religion and integrity. His marriage with Philiberte Lamyn was blessed with a family of four sons and three daughters.* Two daughters, Catherine and Gilberte, died young. The third, intermediate in point of age between the other two, was baptized three days after her birth, on the 25th of July, 1647, in the parish church of Vérosvres, and received the name of Margaret,

rate on this point, especially as his memory has confessedly failed him in some other points connected with the life of Blessed Margaret Mary. It was, on the other hand, after a much briefer interval that her contemporaries would have received the facts from Blessed Margaret Mary. These arguments are confirmed by the fact that the father, M. Claude Alacoque, certainly resided at Terrau a few years after the date of the birth of Blessed Margaret Mary, as there are letters to him from friends of the family, preserved in the archives of the Monastery of Paray-le-Monial, and bearing the address, "A. M. Alacoque, Juge de Terrau, au Terrau." The village of Terrau had its castle, to which was attached a chapel, with a Chaplain, as appears from a public document of 1656. The Blessed Sacrament was kept here, and it was here that Blessed Margaret Mary gave those early and touching proofs of her love for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and for the Blessed Eucharist.

* The names of the seven children, in order of birth, are as follows:—(1.) John; (2.) Claude Philibert; (3.) Catherine; (4.) Chrysostom; (5.) MARGARET; (6.) Gilberte; (7.) James. Catherine and Gilberte

after her godmother, Marguerite de Saint-Amour, lady of M. Claude de Fautrières-Corcheval, Lord of Vérosvres, who resided at the Castle of Corcheval.*

We obtain some glimpse of the special graces with which her infancy was prevented, from the avowal which she herself makes in the account of her life written by herself in obedience to her director, Father Rolin, S. J. "O my only Love!"

died young. Claude Philibert followed the profession of the law, and died September 25, 1665. John had died in 1663, at the same age as his brother. Of the two surviving brothers, Chrysostom and James, the first embraced his father's profession—that of the law; the second, the ecclesiastical state. They both settled at Bois-Sainte-Marie, of which James was the Curé—Chrysostom, perpetual mayor. They both felt the happy influence of the example and exhortations of their sister. They embraced with ardor the Devotion of which she was the Apostle, and built, in 1690, at Bois-Sainte-Marie, a chapel dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

* One of the biographers of Blessed Margaret Mary represents Mde. de Fautrières as residing at the Castle of Terrau; but it is certain, from title-deeds of ancient date, that the castle never belonged to this family. Their residence was at Corcheval, near Baubery. It had its own chapel, which is still standing, and the Blessed Sacrament was kept in it. It was easy then for Margaret to visit it at all hours, without alarming the vigilance of the persons in charge of her.

are her words, "how much am I indebted to Thee for having prevented me with Thy benedictions from my most tender years, making Thyself master and owner of my heart, though Thou knewest well the resistance which this ungrateful heart would make to Thee. No sooner did I come to know myself than Thou madest my soul to see the hatefulness of sin. This struck me with such a horror of it that the least blemish was an intolerable torment to me, so that, in order to check the sallies of my childish vivacity, it was enough to tell me that they were displeasing to God ; this would stop me at once. I felt constantly urged to repeat, though I did not understand the meaning of the words, 'My God, I consecrate to Thee my purity ; I vow to Thee perpetual chastity.'" She pronounced them one day between the two Elevations at Mass, which she was in the habit of hearing on her bare knees, even in the coldest weather. "I did not understand," she says, "what I had done, or the meaning either of the word 'vow' or 'chastity.'" But our Lord, Who had Himself inspired her to make the offering, graciously accepted it, and began to lead her already to a love of solitude, that He might speak more unreservedly to her heart. "All my inclination," she says, "was even at this time to go and bury myself in some solitude." It was only a suggestion of heavenly prudence that restrained

her. "I was kept back," she says, "by the fear of meeting men."

Our Lord had consigned her pure soul, as He afterwards assured her Himself, to the care of His Blessed Mother, whose Daughter she was one day to be, to be fashioned by her for the work of love for which He destined her; and the Queen of Virgins gave her many proofs of her watchful care. "The Blessed Virgin," she tells us, "always took charge of me. I had recourse to her in all my needs, and she rescued me from very great dangers." She had all the confidence of a child towards our Blessed Lady, and with child-like simplicity used her mediation in approaching her Divine Son. "I did not dare," she says, "to address her Divine Son, but I always addressed myself to her." She offered her the chaplet kneeling on her bare knees upon the ground, making a genuflection, or kissing the ground at each *Ave Maria*. Nor did her loving Mistress fail to correct her future Daughter by a gentle rebuke if she happened at any time to be betrayed into any negligence in her service.

Madame de Fautrières, not content with confining her character of godmother merely to the name, expressed a wish to have little Margaret with her, in order to instruct her in her Christian duties in a manner suited to her tender years. The proposal was agreeable to her parents; and

Margaret went accordingly, at the age of four years, to reside at Corcheval. Here she was enabled to gratify that ardent desire with which our Lord, Who had destined her to make known a Devotion intended to extend in souls the reign of His love, had already inspired her, of remaining constantly in His presence. As there was a chapel attached to the castle, it was easy for her to follow this attraction, and frequently to adore our Lord in the Sacrament of His love. It was here that, if wanted, she was always sought after. Here she was to be found kneeling before the altar, her hands joined in prayer. The prayer that she made was the expression of her love for the Blessed Sacrament. She hardly knew what she did there ; she only felt a strong desire of consuming herself like a burning taper, as she expresses it, in His presence, in order to make a return of love for love.

It was at this time that Margaret gave a striking proof of that supernatural instinct which guided the action of her pure soul. Of the two persons who were charged with the care of teaching her her prayers and catechism, one, as she relates herself, she avoided, whilst she gladly attended to the instructions of the other ; though the former caressed her, and from the latter she often received some rebuffs. She understood that her instinct had withdrawn her from one whose character was a pernicious example, and

had attracted her to the other, who was a good Christian.

She lost her father when she was but eight years of age ; and as she was the only daughter, and her mother, Madame Alacoque, who had taken charge of the education of her five sons, was frequently from home, her education was left almost entirely to servants and the neighboring villagers. She was placed, when eight years and a half old, at school with the Dames Urbanistes,* at Charolles ; and to the period spent with these good Religious was limited the real education which Margaret received. They were not long in discovering the treasure which had been confided to their care. They observed such prudence and virtue in her conduct, that they allowed her to make her first Communion when nine years old. From this moment she was so transported with love for our Lord that, in spite of her natural liveliness of disposition, He occupied all her thoughts. " After my first Communion," she says, " our Lord spread such bitterness over all my little enjoyments that I could find relish in none, though I sought them eagerly. But as soon as I thought to take part in them with my companions, I always felt some-

* Such was the name given to the Religious of St. Clare who followed the mitigated rule sanctioned by Pope Urban VIII.

thing which called and drew me aside, and gave me no rest until I followed the attraction. Then the Spirit made me put myself in prayer, almost always prostrate on the ground, or kneeling on my bare knees, provided I was not seen ; for it was a strange torment to me if any one found me thus employed." She felt a great desire to do as she saw the Religious do, though she wished for still greater retirement. "I had a great desire," she says, "to do all I saw the Religious do, for I looked upon them all as Saints, and I thought that if I were a Religious I should become like them. This inspired me with so great a desire that I sighed for nothing else, though I did not think them sufficiently retired for me ; but, knowing no others, I thought that I ought to remain there." And yet it is a singular fact that there was a Monastery of the Visitation at Charolles ; but for some reason, whether from the prejudices of her family, or from some other cause, Margaret never set foot within it. No human feeling was to have place in her attraction to the Daughters of Holy Mary ; her vocation was to come unmistakably from God.





CHAPTER II.

1657—1665.

IN order to gain yet more full possession of her heart, Almighty God visited Margaret with a severe illness, which confined her to her bed for four years. The bones pierced her skin, and she almost entirely lost the use of her limbs. Hence, at the end of two years, her mother was obliged to remove her from the Sisters, who would gladly have kept her always with them.

On her return from Charolles, Margaret went to Lauthecourt, where her mother was then residing. The violence of her malady was such as to defy the skill of the physicians. In this extremity the resolution was taken to have recourse to supernatural means, and she was vowed to the Blessed Virgin. "A promise was made," she says, "that if she cured me I should be one day one of her Daughters. I had no sooner made this vow than I was cured, and I experienced quite a fresh protection on the part of the Blessed Virgin, as if I belonged wholly to her." The Blessed Virgin now took charge of her as her Daughter, and trained her in the exercises of her spiritual life. "She made herself

so entirely mistress of my heart," is Margaret's own account, "that she took upon herself the absolute government of me; she reproved me for my faults, and taught me to do the will of God. It happened that one day I was seated while saying my Rosary, when she presented herself before me, and gave me the following rebuke, which I have never forgotten, though at that time I was young: 'What! my Daughter, is it possible that you should be so negligent in my service?' These words left such an impression on my soul that they have served me all my life."

Some interesting notices regarding these early years of Blessed Margaret Mary have been preserved to us in the "Memoir" drawn up by her brother Chrysostom, who had so many opportunities of observing her closely. She would give, he tells us, two hours in the morning and two in the evening to prayer; so regulating her time, however, as not to be prevented by her spiritual exercises from conforming with charming modesty and alacrity to the wishes of her mother and her brothers. To this end she would rise before day-break and abridge her sleep at night, until her mother, informed by the domestics of the excessive austerities of her daughter, obliged her to sleep with her in her room. To this prayer and watching she joined fasting on three days in the week, and the wearing of an

iron chain which she had constructed for the mortification of her body. She would deprive herself of her meals in order to give them to the poor, retaining only the coarsest food for herself. Her excessive austerities brought on an acute pain in her side, which she would have kept concealed had not a sudden fall forced from her an exclamation which betrayed her secret. She suffered also at the same time from a violent ulceration of her legs. Pressed by her mother to have recourse to medical advice, she assured her, as her brother relates, that our Lord who had sent her so light an infliction would cure her within a month ; and she would join her prayers, she said, with those of her mother to obtain the favor which would have the effect of removing her anxiety. No sooner had the Novena, which they made together, been concluded, than the wounds in her legs entirely disappeared, and she was perfectly cured of the pain in her side. She assured her mother, also, in reply to her entreaties to moderate her austerities for her sake, that our Lord would give her sufficient strength to render her all the service in her power. And, in fact, during the rest of the time that she remained at home with her mother, she was free from all ailment, though she increased her mortifications, which her mother now left her free to practice. It was upon her health being thus re-established that Margaret was placed, as we have seen above,

under the care of the Dames Urbanistes of St. Clare at Charolles.

Margaret was naturally of a joyous and expansive character. She had a keen sense of affection and friendship, and she was even in some danger in consequence of losing her fervor. But Almighty God, who watched jealously over her heart, secured her against this danger by preparing for her a trial the severest that could be imagined for her pious and affectionate disposition. Madame Alacoque was induced to give up the charge of the management of her property to some persons apparently hardly above the position of domestics, who singularly abused her misplaced confidence, and soon reduced both herself and her children to the condition of servants in her own house. Who these persons were, and what was their exact position, Blessed Margaret Mary omits to mention in her narrative, and strives to exempt them from all blame, regarding them but as instruments employed by our Lord to carry out His loving designs in her regard. But what she must have suffered we may gather sufficiently from the details of her own recital. Let us hear her own account of this period of her life :—"Having recovered my health," she says (subsequently to her return from the Convent of Charolles), "I soon forgot my promise. I thought only of seeking my amusement and enjoying my liberty ; I gave

way to vanity and affection for creatures; the tenderness which my mother and brothers entertained for me seemed to authorize my giving myself fine times.* But, O my God! Thou didst soon give me to understand that I was far out in my calculation, and that Thy designs were very different from mine. I did not give a thought then to what Thou hast made me know and experience since, that Thy Sacred Heart having given me birth on Calvary amidst such sorrows, the life which Thou hadst given me could be supported only by the Cross, and that this should be my most delightful food.

“The way, then, in which God arranged things was this: He permitted my mother to strip herself of her authority in her own house, and to resign it into the hands of others. The persons to whom she resigned it took such advantage of it that my mother and I were soon reduced to hard captivity. It is not my intention in what I am going to say to blame these persons;† I do not wish to think that they did wrong in making me suffer. Put away from me, O my God, any such thought. I regard them rather

* “A me donner du bon temps.”

† Blessed Margaret Mary is so extremely reserved in her manner of speaking of these persons, that it is difficult to say exactly who they were. We can hardly suppose that they were mere servants. The household at

as instruments whom God made use of in order to accomplish His holy will. We had, then, no longer any power in the house, and we dared not do anything without permission. It was a state of continual war; everything was kept under lock and key, so that I could not even

Lauthecourt consisted at the time, as appears from old family papers, of Madame Alacoque, widow of M. Claude Alacoque, and grandmother to Margaret; Catherine Alacoque, her daughter; Madame Alacoque-Lamyn, her daughter-in-law, widow of M. Claude Alacoque and mother to Margaret; and Madame Lamyn, the widowed mother of the last-named; besides them were Margaret Mary and her younger brother, James. There were also married domestics who were employed in the service of the house, with their children. It is probable that these domestics, who were necessary for looking after the property of the family, composed principally of these poor widows, assumed an authority which the feebleness of the two aged widows, with the connivance perhaps of Catherine, enabled them to rivet more firmly every day. This view of the case, in keeping with the circumstances insinuated in Blessed Margaret Mary's Memoir, is confirmed by the deposition made by Sister Jane Mary Con-tois, in 1715:—"God had given the aforesaid Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque sufficient strength to bear patiently and without murmuring the ill-treatment of some of the family, which was carried so far that she was sometimes obliged to beg for bread at the neighboring farmhouse."

dress myself in order to go to Holy Mass. I was obliged to borrow my cap and clothes. I acknowledge that I keenly felt this state of slavery. Matters went so far that I could no longer do anything, not even leave the house, without the permission of these persons. Reduced to this state, I felt drawn to seek my consolation in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. All my affections turned in that direction ; but as I was living in a village at some distance from the church, I could not go there except with the permission of these three persons, and it often happened that when one gave her consent the others refused. Often when I gave expression to my grief by my tears, I was reproached with having made an appointment to meet some young man, and that I was annoyed at not being able to keep it, though I had such an abhorrence of anything of the kind that I would rather have been torn into a thousand pieces than have even thought of it. Not knowing then where to take refuge, I hid myself in a corner of the garden, or of the stable, or in some other retired spot, where I could place myself on my knees, and pour out my heart in tears before God. I always did so through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, my good Mother, in whom I had placed all my confidence. I remained there whole days together, without eating or drinking, and sometimes poor persons of the village would give me

a little milk or fruit towards evening. When I returned at length to the house, it was with such fear and trembling, that I seemed as if I were a poor criminal going to receive sentence of condemnation. I should have esteemed myself happy to go and beg my bread rather than live in such constraint. No sooner had I entered the house than they began to find fault with me for not having taken charge of the household and the children ; and, without having an opportunity of saying a word, I was set to work with the servants. After this I passed the night, as I had passed the day, in shedding tears at the foot of my crucifix." It was here that our Lord explained to her the secret of those lessons in the school of suffering in which He was instructing her. "Jesus Christ gave me to understand in this state," she continues, "that He wished to make Himself the absolute Master of my heart ; that He wished to make my life wholly conformable to His suffering life ; and that He would make Himself present to my soul, in order to teach me to act as He had acted Himself in what He had suffered for the love of me." It was from this source that she drew that love of suffering which gave a color to her whole life. "From this time," she continues, "my soul continued so penetrated with the sufferings of our Divine Saviour, that I should have desired my pains never to cease for a minute." Our Divine

Lord was constantly present to her in some stage of His Passion, and in the sight of Him all that she had to suffer became light to her, and she even regarded those who were the occasion of her suffering as the benefactors of her soul in procuring her a closer resemblance to Him. "My Jesus," she says, "was constantly present to me under the form either of the Crucifixion, or of the *Ecce Homo*, or as carrying His Cross. This sight impressed me with such compassion, love, and desire of suffering, that all my evils became light to me. Sometimes when they were on the point in the house of striking me, I was sorry that the hands which were raised to strike me should have been withheld, and that they did not discharge all their anger on me. I felt constantly urged to render every kind of service to these persons, as to the true friends of my soul, and I would gladly have sacrificed myself for them. Nothing gave me greater pleasure than to render them a service, and to say all the good of them that I could. But, alas ! it was not I who did all this that I mention ; it was my Sovereign Master Who had taken possession of my will, and did not permit me to utter a single complaint or murmur, or to feel any resentment, or even to allow any one to bewail my lot or express compassion for me, telling me that He had been treated so Himself, and that He wished that when any one spoke in my presence against

those persons, and I could not hinder it, I should regard them as in the right and myself in the wrong, since my sins deserved much more."

At this part of her narrative, Blessed Margaret Mary expresses her extreme repugnance to continue; but she complies with the wish of our Lord. "Here," she says, "in the extreme violence which I had to do to myself in order to write of things which I had always kept concealed, and of which I had endeavored not even to preserve the recollection, I made my complaints to my Divine Master. But He said to me, 'Continue, my Daughter, continue; it will be neither more nor less, whatever repugnance you may feel; My will must needs be accomplished.' 'But, alas! my God, how can I remember what has passed more than twenty-five years ago?' 'Do you not know that I am the Eternal Memory of My Heavenly Father and forget nothing, and that in Me the past and the future are as the present? Write, then, without fear, as I shall dictate to you. I will shed on your writing the unction of My grace, in order that I may be thereby glorified. I wish this of you:—

"'First, that it may be seen that I make sport of all the precautions which you have taken to hide the graces with which I have taken pleasure in enriching with such profusion so poor and wretched a creature as you are. You should

never lose the remembrance of these graces, but constantly praise Me for them.

“ ‘In the second place, to teach you that you are not to appropriate to yourself these graces, or be afraid of communicating them ; for I have wished to make use of your heart as a channel to pour them, according to My designs, upon souls. Many will be drawn by this means from the abyss of perdition, as I will let you know hereafter.

“ ‘In the third place, in order to show that I am the Eternal Truth, that I am faithful to My promises, and that the favors which I have done you can stand every kind of examination and trial.’

“ These words gave me such strength that, in spite of the extreme pain I feel at my writing being seen, I resolved to continue, whatever it might cost me, in order to accomplish the will of my Sovereign Master.”

But though Margaret, from the desire which she had to resemble our Blessed Lord in His sufferings, gladly endured this persecution as far as it affected herself, she felt keenly the suffering which it was the occasion of entailing upon her mother. But here again she experienced the singular intervention of our Blessed Lady, to whom she addressed herself with her usual confidence as Mediatrix with her Divine Son.

“ My heaviest cross,” she says, “ was, not to

be able to lighten that of my mother, which was a hundred times harder for me to bear than my own. I did not even dare to give her the consolation of speaking of it, for fear that we might offend God by talking together of our troubles. It was especially in her sickness that my affliction was at its height. For, as she was left entirely to my care and the little services I could render her, she suffered a great deal ; inasmuch as, everything being sometimes locked up, I had to go and beg even eggs and other things required for the sick. This was no slight torture to me, in consequence of my natural timidity, especially as I was often very harshly received by the villagers. I had the pain of seeing that in an alarming attack of erysipelas, with which my mother was afflicted in her head, they were satisfied with having her bled by a common village surgeon who happened to pass, and who told me that she could not recover without a miracle. No one, except myself, was at all distressed or troubled at it. I was in constant distress. In the midst of all this I met only with mockery, injuries, and accusations. I did not know to whom to have recourse, or to whom to address myself, except to my ordinary refuge, the Blessed Virgin, and my Sovereign Master.

“ Having gone to Mass on the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord, to ask Him to be the physician of my poor mother Himself, and to

teach me what I should do, He performed what I asked with such mercy that, on returning home, I found that the swelling on the face had burst, leaving a wound as large as the palm of the hand, which sent forth an intolerable smell. No one would go near her. I had no experience in dressing wounds ; I could not before this even bear to see them or touch them. I had no ointment for dressing the wounds on my mother's face. I did nothing but cut away each day a great deal of the bad flesh, expecting everything from the hands of Divine Providence. I felt my courage and confidence in the goodness of my Sovereign Master increase, and I seemed to see Him constantly present. The wound was healed in a few days, contrary to all human expectation.

“During the whole of the time that my mother was ill I hardly ever went to bed or slept, and I hardly took any nourishment for days together. My Divine Master consoled and supported me by giving me a perfect conformity to His holy will. For amidst all that happened to me I had recourse to Him alone, saying to Him : ‘O my Sovereign Master, if it were not Thy will this would not have happened ; but I thank Thee for permitting it, in order to make me like to Thee.’”

The sufferings which Margaret endured from this persecution served to wean her from the inclination to amusement to which her natural

gaiety of disposition inclined her, and to re-awaken her taste for prayer. She hardly understood the meaning of the word, but the very name possessed a charm for her. Not knowing to whom to apply to instruct her to pray, she had recourse to our Lord. He would be Himself her Master, and He instructed her in a manner of praying which she retained all her life. Let us hear her own account: "I felt myself," she says, "strongly drawn to prayer. This attraction which I felt was the occasion of a great deal of suffering to me, for it seemed to me that I could not satisfy it, not knowing how to make my prayer, and having no one to teach me, for I had no opportunity of conversing with spiritual persons. I knew nothing else of prayer but the name, and the very name of prayer ravished my heart with delight. I addressed myself, then, to my Sovereign Master, and He taught me how He wished I should make it; and this has served me all my life. He made me prostrate myself humbly before Him in order to beg pardon for everything by which I had offended Him. Then, after having adored Him, I offered Him my prayer without knowing in what way I should apply myself to it. He then presented Himself to me in the Mystery in which He would have me consider Him, and He applied my mind so closely to it, holding my soul and all my powers so absorbed in

Himself, that I felt no distraction. My heart felt consumed with the desire of loving Him, and this gave me an insatiable desire of Holy Communion, and of sharing His sufferings.

“I had only the night-time to pray in. I took what I could of it ; and though the interior employment of my soul, of which I have spoken, was more delightful to me than I can express, I did not regard it as prayer, and I felt an earnest and increasing desire to be able to make it. I promised my Divine Master that as soon as He should have taught me, I would give to it all the time that I could. His goodness kept me so strongly fixed in this manner of prayer that it took from me all taste for vocal prayers.”

This desire of interior communication with our Lord led her constantly before the Blessed Sacrament. Keeping there as close as she could to the Altar, her desire of being as near as possible to our Lord overcoming her natural repugnance to attract notice, she required no words to express the sentiments of her heart. She was satisfied to remain in His presence, consuming herself, as she expresses it, before Him. Her love for the Blessed Sacrament rendered her ingenious in discovering means of gaining the good-will of her persecutors in order that she might spend some moments before It.

“I could not make use any more of vocal prayer,” she says, “before the Blessed Sacra-

ment, where I felt myself so absorbed that I was never tired of being there. I would gladly have passed whole days and nights there, without eating or drinking. I did not well know what I did there, except that I consumed myself in His presence like a burning taper, in order to make Him a return of love for love. I could not remain at the bottom of the church, and though I felt a great confusion interiorly, I did not fail to approach as near as I could to the Altar on which the Blessed Sacrament reposed. I envied only those who could communicate frequently, and who enjoyed the liberty of remaining before the Blessed Sacrament. I endeavored to gain the good-will of the persons of whom I spoke, in order to obtain from them the liberty of going to spend some minutes before Jesus Christ in this Mystery."

Margaret mentions here an incident which, owing either to an unwarrantable announcement made by the Curé of the village or her own misunderstanding, led to her being deprived of Holy Communion at Christmas. "I will notice here," she says, "what happened to me in punishment of my sins. On Christmas night, the Curé of the parish announced that those who had not slept could not go to Communion; and, as I could never sleep on that night, I was prevented going to Communion, and, in consequence, that day of joy

became for me a day of tears, which served me for food and enjoyment." What her sins were we may judge from those which she mentions, and which she deplored with tears all her life. "I had committed," she says, "great sins ; for, on one occasion, being in company with other young girls, I disguised myself during the time of Carnival, from a foolish desire to please them. This has been to me a subject of sorrow and tears all my life, as also the faults which I had committed in wearing the trappings of vanity."

She here gives expression to the regret which she feels at the repugnance she has experienced in continuing her narrative, and her resolution to continue it, cost what it may. "The resistance which I have made to Thee so long, O my God ! in submitting to finish this writing penetrates me still with sorrow and confusion. Have pity on my weakness, my Divine Master ; support me that I may not sink under the rigor of Thy just reproaches. I protest, with the help of Thy grace, that I will no longer resist Thee, though it should cost me my life, and bring upon me the contempt of all creatures, and arm against me all the rage of hell. I beg pardon of Thee for my resistance, and strength to complete what Thou desirest of me, whatever repugnance my self-love may cause me to feel."



CHAPTER III.

1665—1668.

BUT Margaret had yet a harder trial to undergo, and one which was the more dangerous, inasmuch as it came under the appearance of kindness, and veiled its attack under the powerful claims of natural affection and the specious sophistry of the world. Margaret had bound herself when quite a child, as we have seen, by a vow of perpetual chastity. She was now eighteen years of age, and her mother and her friends were desirous that she should marry. Her home, accordingly, which had been the scene of such unremitting persecution, changed its aspect, and Margaret was called upon to take part in gaieties and amusements in which her presence was intended to form the principal attraction. Many claimants for her hand presented themselves; for, though not rich, she was distinguished by a sweetness of disposition, piety, and prudence, which could not fail to attract those who looked for the best guarantee for happiness which a married state can offer. Margaret's lively disposition gave her a natural taste for amusement, and hence the society into which she was now

thrown was likely to lead her into occasions of dissipation from which she had been already withdrawn.

Another and more powerful and insidious form under which the danger assailed her, was her affection for her mother. Madame Alacoque was well aware of the desire her daughter had long entertained of consecrating herself to the service of God in religion, and she was greatly alarmed at the thought of losing her; for she looked to her as her stay and support. "My dear daughter," she had said to her upon her miraculous recovery at the close of the Novena, which has been mentioned above, "since God has restored you your health, as I have begged of Him so long, it is doubtless His will that you should take care of it, to be the comfort of my old age. I beg of you in His name to grant me this satisfaction." Moreover, Madame Alacoque looked to the marriage of her daughter as offering the only prospect of escaping from the painful state of dependence to which she found herself reduced. We can understand, then, how bitter was the struggle in which Margaret was now engaged. On the one hand, the importunities of her friends, and the tears and distress of her mother, urged her unceasingly to marry. On the other, "God pursued my heart," she says, "so closely that He gave me no truce. I had my vow constantly before my eyes, together

with the thought that, if I were unfaithful to it, I should be eternally lost."

The devil, taking advantage of the tender affection Margaret entertained for her mother, reminded her unceasingly of the tears she shed. He represented to her that if she followed out her intention of becoming a Religious she would cause her mother to die of grief, and that she would have to answer for it to God, as her mother was left entirely to her care. "This caused me," she says, "insupportable torture, for I loved her so tenderly, and she me, that we could not live without seeing each other. On the other hand, the desire I had of being a Religious gave me no rest, joined to the horror I had of everything against purity. This made me suffer a real martyrdom." To crown her difficulties, Margaret had no one to whom she could open her mind, and who could give her counsel and guide her in her perplexity. "At length," she says, "the tender love I had for my good mother began to gain the upper hand. I thought that, as I was only a child at the time I made my vow, I might without difficulty be dispensed from it, especially as I did not understand, when I made it, what it really was." The devil was not slow at such times in urging, under the specious appearance of piety, that if she were engaged in religion she would be no longer at liberty to fast, give alms, and take the discipline

as she wished. He represented to her also that so great was the sanctity which the state demanded of such as embraced it, that it would be impossible for her ever to hope to attain to it, and that in this state, therefore, she would undoubtedly lose her soul.

Induced by these reasons, Margaret began to enter more into the world, to pay more attention to dress, and to indulge more freely her natural inclination to gaiety. But our Lord was watching jealously over her heart. He drew it powerfully to Himself by His secret inspirations, and amidst the scenes of enjoyment which she promised herself rebuked her severely for her irresolution and want of fidelity. "Thou, O my God," she says, "sole witness of the greatness and length of the pain which this struggle brought upon me, and under which I should have sunk a thousand times but for the extraordinary assistance of Thy mercy, Thou hadst far different designs from those which I was projecting in my heart. Thou madest me understand on this occasion, as on so many others, that it was indeed hard for me to resist the powerful goad of Thy love." The burning shafts of divine love, even in the midst of the scenes of her amusement, pierced her heart, as she describes it, through and through. "The grief which I felt in consequence," she says, "rendered me wholly powerless; and as this was not yet

enough to detach a heart so ungrateful as mine, I felt myself, as it were, bound with cords, and drawn so powerfully that at last I was obliged to follow Him who called me." Margaret was led by this powerful inspiration to some retired spot, where our Lord rebuked her severely. "Alas!" she says, "He appeared jealous of my wretched heart." There, after she had begged His pardon, prostrate upon the ground, she would take a severe discipline. "And yet, after this," she says, "I did not fail to return to my vanities just as before, and I fell back into the same resistance." Finally, when in the evening she put aside her dress, "the accursed livery of Satan," as she describes it, our Lord presented Himself to her as He appeared after His Scourging, and reproached her deeply, saying that it was her vanities that had reduced Him to that state, that she was losing time which was infinitely precious, and of which He should demand of her a strict account at the hour of death; that she was betraying and persecuting Him after He had given her such proofs of His love, and of the desire which He had that she should make herself like to Him. "All this," she says, "made so deep an impression on me, and inflicted so painful a wound on my heart, that I wept bitterly, and it would be difficult for me to express all that I suffered and all that passed at that time within me."

Had we only the accounts of those who lived with her, we should not have formed an idea of the struggle which was taking place in Margaret's heart. They speak only of her modesty and reserve, of her frequently retiring from company to give herself to exercises of piety, and of her ingenuity in discovering excuses which might enable her to absent herself without remark. They tell us that when any one came to see her she contrived to turn the conversation upon subjects relating to God, and that when it took another direction she would appear distracted, and make no reply. Her brother Chrysostom mentions expressly, with regard to her dress, that upon her mother's leaving it to her choice to select what was most tasteful, she would, as he says, with her ordinary humility and modesty, choose what was most plain. She gave no encouragement, he says, to any of the claimants for her hand in marriage, though in such a manner that all agreed in praising her virtues and good qualities, and the common impression prevailed that she contemplated religious life.

The reproaches made by our Lord, as He presented Himself to her in His state of suffering, inspired Margaret with the desire of taking vengeance on herself for the injuries she inflicted on Him, and in order that she might bear some resemblance to Him. "I did not know," she says,

“what spiritual life was ; for I had never heard mention of it. I only knew what my Divine Master taught me, and what He made me do with loving violence.” “In the grief which constrained me,” she says, “I tied this wretched criminal body with cords full of knots, and I bound it so tight that I could hardly breathe or eat. I left these cords there so long that they buried themselves in the flesh, and I could not tear them from it except with great violence and cruel pain. I did the same with little chains, which I fastened on my arms ; I could only remove them by taking away with them pieces of the flesh. I lay during the night on a plank, or on knotty sticks, which I placed in my bed, and afterwards I took the discipline.”

Margaret endeavored also to find in these bodily penances a relief for that severe struggle which she was enduring in her mind, and in comparison with which all that she suffered exteriorly appeared to her as nothing. The sacrifice which our Lord was asking of her was the perfect sacrifice of her heart, and this, in the perplexity in which she found herself placed, she did not as yet understand how she was to make. Margaret had no one to whom she could open her mind. She bore her interior struggle in secret ; and all that was known of it exteriorly was that she grew every day more pale, and was wasting away. “The fear that I had of offend-

ing God," she says, "tormented me more than all the rest. It seemed to me that my sins were continual, and they appeared to me so great that I was astonished that hell did not open under my feet to swallow up so miserable a sinner."

Margaret had passed several years amidst these troubles and sufferings, with no other consolation than what she received from our Lord, Who made Himself her guide and director. The desire which she had formerly entertained of entering religion now awoke again within her so strongly that she resolved to do so, cost what it might. This must have been when she was about eighteen years of age; for she was unable, she tells us, to carry this desire into effect for about four or five years. During the whole of that time her troubles and combats increased; whilst she also increased her penances as our Lord allowed her.

Our Lord, indeed, produced a great change in her soul. She read only the lives of the Saints, and, as she opened the book, she would look for the life of a Saint which would be easy for her to imitate, that she also might become a Saint. As she asked of our Lord with simplicity to make her one, He showed her, she tells us, the beauty of virtue, and especially of the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It was in practicing these, He told her, that she

was to become a Saint. But the Saints, she thought, had never offended God, or, if they had, they had lived ever after in the practice of penance. This gave her a great desire of practicing it. But our Lord impressed her so strongly at the same time with the fear of following in this her own will, that she was convinced, she says, that, whatever she might do, it would be pleasing to Him only so far as it proceeded from obedience and love. This excited in her a great desire of loving Him, and performing all her actions from obedience. She begged of our Lord, therefore, to teach her what she should do in order to love Him.

Our Lord upon this bestowed upon her so tender a love for the poor that she would have desired, she says, to have no conversation with any but them. He inspired her with so tender a compassion for them that, as far as it was in her power, she would have left nothing for herself. When she had money she would give it to the little children to induce them to come to her, in order that she might teach them their prayers and their catechism. But even what she had herself she would not give away without the sanction of obedience, not only on the part of her mother, but also of those persons with whom she lived. This, as may be supposed, was a source of continual mortification to her. She thought that, in order to try whether she could

live as a Religious, she should submit herself to those whom she felt the greatest repugnance in obeying. "But the ardent desire," she says, "which I felt to love God made me surmount every difficulty, and made me careful to do all that was most opposed to my natural inclination, and to which I felt the greatest repugnance."

Margaret was not content with supplying the poor with food and spiritual instruction; she would also dress their wounds. She felt naturally a strong repugnance even to look upon them, but her desire to conquer herself, and her love for our Lord, led her not only to handle, but even to kiss them. Her ignorance and inexperience in such matters was supplied for by the power of her Divine Master, Whose love had engaged her in them; and wounds, even the most dangerous, were healed in a surprisingly short time. "I had more confidence," she says, "on my part, in His goodness than in the remedies I employed."

Her natural love of pleasure and amusement was constantly checked within her by the remembrance of what our Blessed Lord had suffered for her. "I could no longer find any relish," she says, "in anything of the kind, though I often did what I could to go in search of it." The sight of our Lord, Who presented Himself to her as He appeared after His Scourg-

ing, prevented her entering into any such enjoyment. He would reproach her in words which pierced her to the heart: "Would you then take this pleasure, whilst I have never taken any? I abandoned Myself to every kind of bitterness to gain your heart, and you would yet dispute it with Me!"

Margaret here complains of her want of gratitude for the graces which she received, for the jealous care with which our Lord had ever watched over her heart, and the powerful attraction by which He had drawn it to Himself. "This made a great impression," she says, "on my soul; but I acknowledge that I responded but very ill to all these graces." "My mind was so gross," is her own account of herself, "and so little spiritual, that I did good only because my Divine Master pressed me so strongly that I could not, so to say, resist. This is a great subject of confusion to me in all that I here write. Would that I could make known to the whole world how much I deserve the most rigorous chastisements for my continual resistance to God, and manifest, at the same time, the greatness of His mercies. For it seemed as though He had undertaken to pursue my heart without respite, opposing continually His goodness to my malice, and His love to my ingratitude. The remembrance of this ingratitude has made the whole of my life the subject

of the most lively grief to me. I can never make a sufficient acknowledgment of all that I owe to my Sovereign Benefactor, Who, in spite of my malice, has taken so loving a care of me from my cradle, and has continued it to me all my life."

As Margaret, lost in the thought of her own unworthiness, was expressing her astonishment at the ineffable condescension and patience of our Divine Lord, He gave her some intimation of the design for which He had chosen and fashioned her; and we may here see the part which He would have His Blessed Mother take in forming the Apostle of His Sacred Heart. "It is because I have a desire," said our Blessed Lord, "to make of you as it were a compound of My love and mercy." "I chose you for My Spouse," He said to her another time, "and we promised mutual fidelity when you made the vow of chastity. It was I who pressed you to make the vow before the world had any part in your heart, because I would have your heart wholly pure, and unsullied by any earthly affections; and, in order to preserve you in this state, I kept your will from the malice which might have corrupted it. After this, I consigned you to the care of My holy Mother, that she might fashion you according to My designs."

"And in truth," remarks Margaret, "the Blessed Virgin has always acted as a Mother to

me, and has never refused me her assistance. I went to her in all my troubles and wants, and I went to her with such confidence that it seemed to me as though I had nothing to fear under her maternal protection. I made a vow to her, at this time, to fast every Saturday, and to say the Office of the Immaculate Conception when I should be able to read it, and to make seven genuflections every day of my life, with seven *Ave Marias*, to honor her Seven Dolours, and I consecrated myself to be for ever her slave, begging of her not to refuse me this character. I spoke to her with simplicity, like a child, as to my good mother, for whom I felt even then penetrated with a truly tender love." This divine Mother had occasion to reprove her severely, she says, when she saw her again almost ready to sink under the terrible struggle she had so long to sustain, and which was again renewed when Margaret was now about twenty years of age.

In spite of the graces which she received from our Lord, Margaret felt that she could no longer resist the persecutions of her family and the tears and tenderness of her mother. The devil, too, constantly suggested to her the thought: "What could she, wretched creature as she was, be thinking of in wishing to be a Religious? She would render herself the laughing-stock of every one; she would never persevere; and how could

she stand the confusion of quitting the convent and returning to the world?" Assailed thus on every side, and without a guide to throw light upon her perplexities, Margaret began to yield, in spite of the horror with which she looked upon such a step. "I began," she says, "to give in to my mother's wish that I should settle in the world; but I could not think of it without shedding abundant tears, for I felt an inexpressible horror of marriage." Our Blessed Lord Himself, Who had always kept the remembrance of her vow before her mind, took pity upon her in her perplexity, and poured light and peace upon her soul.

It was one day after receiving Him in Holy Communion that this happy change was wrought in her, and her heart at once enjoyed a profound peace. He allowed her to see clearly that He deserved the preference above all earthly rivals. "He showed me," she says, "that He was more worthy of love, more wealthy, powerful, and perfect than any of the sons of men, and He reproached me that, after having promised myself to Him so many years, I should still think of breaking my engagement with Him, and entering into any other alliance." "Oh! be assured," He added, "that if you do Me this injury, I will abandon you for ever; but if you remain faithful to Me I will never leave you, and I will be Myself your strength and your victory.

to triumph over your enemies. I excuse your ignorance, because as yet you do not know Me ; but if you wish to follow Me, I will teach you to know Me, and I will manifest Myself to you." The effect of these words was to breathe a profound calm upon the soul of Margaret. It is thus that our Divine Lord assures the faithful soul of His presence ; He banishes all wavering doubts, and addresses to it those words by which He consoled His disciples after His Resurrection—"Peace be to you ; it is I, fear not." He filled Margaret with so strong a resolution that she determined at once to die rather than ever change, and so entirely had her difficulties disappeared that it seemed to her, as she expresses it, as though her chains were broken and she had no longer anything to fear. All that she had most dreaded in religious life appeared now as nothing compared with the danger she had escaped. Her distrust gave way to a loving confidence ; and, in place of her former irresolution, she gave up her liberty unreserved to our Lord. "On my having fixed my determination," she says, "to embrace a religious life, the Divine Spouse of my soul, as though He feared that I might yet escape Him, asked me to give my consent that He might take possession and make Himself master of my liberty, seeing how feeble I was. I gave my consent with all my heart, and from that moment He took such

entire possession of my liberty that it seemed to me as though I had no longer any use of it. I renewed my vow, beginning now to understand its real nature, and I told Him that, even though it should cost me a thousand lives, I would never be anything but a Religious."

Margaret openly avowed her intention, and her family and friends clearly understood that her final resolution had been taken. Even her mother, though she could not restrain her tears in secret, no longer ventured to combat her daughter's purpose. Her friends, however, still continued to urge upon her reasons for remaining in the world; and her brother offered her part of his own fortune with a view to secure her a more advantageous settlement. But to all such appeals, "my heart," she says, "had become as insensible as a rock." She had still, however, to remain three years more in the world, combating these and similar difficulties.





CHAPTER IV.

1668—1671.

THOUGH it was sufficiently understood that Margaret was to enter Religion, there was still question as to the particular Order to which she was called. One of her uncles, who was also her guardian, having invited her to visit him at his house, at Mâcon, Margaret was thus led to make acquaintance with one of his daughters, a Religious in the convent of the Ursulines in that town. The good Nun, seeing Margaret's desire to embrace religious life, did all in her power to engage her cousin to remain with her in her own convent. She urged every argument that her affection for her could suggest, and begged of her father to use all his influence and authority with Margaret to the same end. She even offered to share with her the sum of money which her own family paid annually for her, and to obtain from the Community a diminution in Margaret's favor of a quarter of the dowry which was commonly paid on entering the convent. Margaret felt great difficulty in resisting these urgent appeals, owing to the affection she entertained for her cousin, and her deference for her

uncle, who treated her as one of his own children. She was satisfied, however, that it was not here that our Lord would have her be, and she said to her cousin: "See, if I were to enter into your convent, it would only be from my affection for you. My wish is to go to some place where I have neither relations nor acquaintances, in order that I may become a Religious for the love of God." But still, as she did not know what was the Order to which she was called, having had so few opportunities of making acquaintance with any, she found it no easy task to combat the powerful appeals that were made to induce her to remain. Her brother, who had not as yet given his consent to her entering Religion, was much annoyed with her, as he supposed that all that was taking place was done with her consent, and that she wished to enter the convent in spite of him and without the consent of her family. But the interior voice of our Lord was silently calling Margaret to a different Order, and though it was in accents which were as yet but indistinct, still they were sufficiently clear to prevent her adopting any such course as her brother attributed to her. "I was far," she says, "from entertaining such a design, for the more strongly I was urged to enter, the greater distaste I felt for it, and a secret voice said to me, 'I do not wish you there, but with Holy Mary.'"

It was the name of Holy Mary that possessed a secret charm for Margaret. This was almost all she knew at this time of the Order founded by St. Francis of Sales, and though her friends did all in their power to prevent her making acquaintance with any of its monasteries, the name alone was as "oil poured out," breathing a fragrance which attracted her to the Daughters of the Visitation of Holy Mary. The more attempts that were made to turn her aside, "the greater desire I felt," she says, "to enter. I was attracted by the sweet name of 'Holy Mary,' and I felt that it was there that I was to find what I was in search of." The Holy Founder, too, seemed to give his future Daughter an intimation of the place which our Lord had destined for her in his family. "One day," she says, "as I was looking at a picture of the great St. Francis of Sales, it seemed to me that he cast so tender and paternal a look upon me, addressing me at the same time as his Daughter, that I regarded him from that time forward in no other light than as my Father."

She did not dare, however, to breathe a word regarding these thoughts to any one; and so urgent were her cousin and the whole Community in their attempts to keep her with them, that she could hardly have escaped their affectionate importunities, when our Lord Himself interposed, and extricated her from the difficult

position in which she was placed. "They were on the point," she says, "of opening to me the gate of the convent, when I received the news that my brother was very ill, and my mother at the point of death. This obliged me to leave at once to go to her, nor could they prevent my going, though I was myself ill. But, indeed, my ailment arose rather from the regret which I felt at seeing myself forced to enter a convent to which I thought I was not called by God than from any other cause."

Margaret was thus delivered from the danger to which she was exposed, but on her return home she found herself again involved in troubles similar to those by which she had been beset before. She was told that it was now evident that her mother could not live without her, and that, if she left her, she would be answerable for her death. This was said to her even by ecclesiastics, and caused her great pain in consequence of the affection which she entertained for her mother; "and the devil," she says, "took advantage of it to make me believe that this would cause me to lose my soul."

Our Lord, on the other hand, urged her powerfully to carry out her resolution of leaving all to follow Him, and the strong desire which she felt of conforming herself to Him in His suffering life made her think lightly of anything she had to suffer for His sake.

She gained fresh strength for combating the difficulties against which she had to contend by receiving at this time, in the year 1669, the Sacrament of Confirmation at the hands of Monsignor Jean de Meaupou, Bishop of Châlons-sur-Saône, who was making his visitation at Vérosvres. She took, on this occasion, the name of Mary in addition to that of Margaret, in order to bind herself by a fresh obligation to the Blessed Virgin. The Holy Spirit filled her with an increased desire of conforming herself to our Blessed Lord. She would express this desire as she cast herself at the feet of her crucifix by saying, "How happy should I be, my dear Lord, if Thou wouldst imprint in me the likeness of Thy sufferings!" "This is what I design to do," our Lord replied, "provided that you do not resist, and do what you can on your part." She redoubled, with this view, her penances. "In order to give Him," she says, "some drops of my blood, I tied my fingers tightly, and then pierced them with needles. I took the discipline every day in Lent, as far as I was able, in order to honor His Scourging. On the three last days of the Carnival I would gladly have cut myself in pieces to repair the outrages which sinners offered to His Divine Majesty. I fasted on these three days, as far as I could, on bread and water, giving to the poor all that was given me for my nourishment."

Together with this desire of suffering in imitation of our Blessed Lord, Margaret Mary was filled with no less desire of receiving Him in Holy Communion. It was the thought of the opportunities which she would enjoy in Religion of frequently communicating that filled her with the greatest joy when she contemplated leaving the world. She was enabled to enjoy that privilege but rarely now. She would have regarded herself as the happiest person in the world if she could have done so frequently, and if she might have been allowed to pass whole nights alone before the Blessed Sacrament. "I felt such confidence when I was there," she says, "that, though I was naturally extremely timid, I had no longer any such feeling as soon as I was in that place of my dearest delights." On the eve of Communion she was absorbed in profound recollection, and could with difficulty speak. After Communion she would have been glad neither to eat nor drink, see or speak with any one, so great were the consolation and peace which she felt.

This intimate union with our Lord in Holy Communion gave her a great desire of recollection and prayer, in order that she might the better learn how to love our Lord ; for, though she had been taught by her Divine Master Himself, she thought she had still to learn how to pray. It was in the midst of difficul-

ties now that she had to practice prayer and recollection, for she was still constantly exposed to those domestic persecutions which have been described above. "I sought retirement," she says, "as much as I could, in order to learn in silence to love my Sovereign Good, Who pressed me to make Him a return of love for love. But I thought I could never love Him as I should, whatever I might do, unless I learned how to pray. I knew only what my Divine Master taught me, that is to say, to abandon myself to all His divine movements when I could shut myself up with Him in some retired spot. But I had but little leisure allowed me, for I had to work all day long with the servants; and then in the evening it appeared that I had done nothing to satisfy the persons with whom I lived. I was so scolded that I had no heart to eat, and I withdrew myself when I best could to find a few minutes' peace, which I so much desired."

Our Blessed Lord had taught Margaret Mary the excellence of obedience; she begged of Him, therefore—in the fear she had lest her actions, and especially her mortifications, might fail to please Him, from their proceeding from self-will—to send her some one who might guide her in her wish to serve Him. "Am I not sufficient for you?" was the reply she received from our Lord. "What do you fear? Is it possible that a child

so fondly loved as you are should be lost in the arms of an all-powerful Father?" Our Lord, however, complied with her request by sending her a holy Franciscan Father, who came to the village on occasion of the Jubilee granted in 1670 by Clement X., on his accession to the Pontificate, and remained there some time, in order to hear the confessions of the inhabitants. This was a means which our Lord had also provided to enable Margaret to carry out her desire of entering Religion. In her anxiety to make a complete confession, and to omit nothing in exposing to the good Father the state of her soul, Margaret had spent more than a fortnight in writing out her confession. "It seemed to me," she says, "that I could never do enough with it, in consequence of my great sins. I was penetrated with so lively a sorrow for them that I not only shed abundance of tears, but would gladly, in the excess of my sorrow, have published them before the whole world." In her simplicity, and in the persuasion that, owing to her blindness, she could not form an adequate idea of her sins, or express their enormity, she copied out whole pages from books treating of the examination of conscience, and thought that it was right that she should at least have the confusion of accusing herself of sins, the commission of which would have filled her with horror. Such a confession might with reason

have given her considerable scruples, were it not, as she says herself, that our Lord had assured her that He pardoned all to a will without malice. She was not allowed by her Confessor, as may be supposed, to gratify her wish, and was ordered to pass over several pages, even though, as she says, "I begged of him to allow me to satisfy my conscience, as I was a greater sinner than he supposed."

This confession had the effect of leaving Margaret in peace. She told the Father something of her manner of life, though she did not dare to tell him all; for "I thought," she says, "that it would be vanity to do so." She received from him advice upon many points. She discovered to him also the resolution she had taken to enter Religion, and how she had been detained by her brother in the world for four or five years. The Father hereupon spoke to her brother so strongly on the subject, that Chrysostom asked his sister whether she still continued in the same mind; and on hearing her reply that she would rather die than change, he promised to allow her to carry out her wishes. He went accordingly to speak regarding her dowry with her cousin, the Ursuline Religious, who had still continued to use every means to induce her to enter her own convent. It was the wish of her mother also, and of her friends, that she should enter this convent. Margaret, not knowing

how to escape the difficulty which thus again pressed her, recurred to her usual resource, the intervention of "her good Mistress," the Blessed Virgin. Our Blessed Lady consoled her, and said to her lovingly, "Fear nothing; you shall be indeed my Daughter, and I will be always your good Mother." "These words delighted me," remarks Margaret, "and left me no doubt that my desires would be accomplished, in spite of all opposition." Her brother, on his return, mentioned the sum required for her dowry, and told her that it was for her to make the arrangement, as the agreement was not yet concluded. "It will never be concluded," replied Margaret, resolutely. "My wish is to go to the 'Holy Maries,' in some convent at a distance, where I have neither relatives nor acquaintances, for I will be a Religious only for the love of God. I wish to abandon the world entirely, and to bury myself in retirement, where I may forget it and be forgotten by it, and never see it again." Her friends proposed to her several convents without being able to satisfy her mind. "But as soon," she says, "as they named Paray to me, my heart dilated with joy, and I gave my consent at once."

A last visit, which she paid before her departure to the convent of the Dames Urbanistes, under whose care she had been placed when eight years of age, was the occasion of a severe

struggle which she had yet to endure. The good Religious took their former pupil into the convent, telling her that she was their child, and asking why she would leave them, seeing how tenderly they loved her. They could not bear, they said, to see her join the 'Holy Maries,' convinced as they were that she would not persevere with them. Margaret replied that she would make the attempt. They made her promise that, if she left, she would return to them. "But whatever they could say to me," she says, "my heart remained insensible, and was only the more firmly strengthened in its resolution."

"I pass over," says Margaret, in her narrative, "all the other combats I had to endure, to come speedily to the scene of my happiness, my dear Paray." No sooner had she entered the parlor than she heard these words addressed to her interiorly—"It is here that I would have you be." She accordingly told her brother that he must absolutely come to a settlement and final agreement, for she was determined never to go anywhere else. This resolution on the part of Margaret Mary surprised him the more as he had brought her to Paray only to see the Religious of Holy Mary. But she was determined not to leave until all had been settled. "After this," she says, "I seemed to receive a new life, so great was the happiness and peace

which I felt. And this made me so gay, even outwardly, that those who did not know what was passing in my heart remarked, 'she has not very much the air of a Religious.' In fact, I was dressed in a more worldly way than I had ever been before, and I also showed great gaiety of manner, in consequence of the great interior joy which I felt at seeing myself on the point of being wholly consecrated to my Sovereign Good. Alas," she concludes, "as I write this He often makes me this loving reproach: 'See, my Daughter, if you can find a father wounded with love for an only son, who has ever taken such care of him, and given him such marks of affection as I have given you, and am ready still to give you. My love has never ceased to cultivate your soul from your tenderest infancy, and fashion it according to My Heart, waiting for you with patience and gentleness, without being repelled by all your resistance. Remember, then, that were you ever to forget the gratitude you owe Me, and fail to refer all the glory to Me, it would be the means of drying up for you this inexhaustible source of good.'





CHAPTER V.

1671.

MARGARET MARY returned home, in order to arrange some temporal affairs. These were speedily settled, and she then bade adieu, with indescribable joy, to all that had before engaged her tenderest affection. "At length," she says, "the long-desired day on which I was to bid adieu to the world having come, never did my heart feel such joy and strength. It was in a manner insensible as well to friendship as the grief which my friends, my mother especially, testified at my departure. I did not shed a tear on leaving them; I felt as if I was a slave delivered from chains and prison to enter the house of her Spouse, to take possession of it, and to enjoy in full liberty His presence, His goods, and His love. It was thus He spoke to my heart, which was quite out of itself. I could give no other account of my vocation to 'Holy Mary,' but that I wished to be a Daughter of the Blessed Virgin."

But Margaret Mary was to endure one last severe struggle before entering her abode of peace. "I must acknowledge here," she says,

“that when the time came for my entering the monastery, which was on a Saturday, I was assailed by such violent trouble, that it seemed to me that my soul was on the point of being separated from my body. But no sooner had I entered than my trouble ceased, and it was shown me that our Lord had taken off from me the sackcloth of my captivity, and clothed me with the robe of gladness. I was, in fact, so transported with joy, that I exclaimed, ‘It is here that my God would have me be.’”

We are reminded in this of what St. Teresa mentions regarding herself on her quitting the world to enter religion. “I still remember,” she says, “as if it were to-day, how, as I was leaving my father’s house, I felt in such a state that I think if I had been at the point of death I could not have felt greater pain. It seemed as if all my bones were torn one from the other. . . . But our Lord allowed me to feel, the moment I put on the habit, what special favors He has in store for those who do violence to their own inclinations for the love of Him. This interior struggle was known only to Him. I showed outwardly only constancy and resolution. But no sooner was I clothed, than I felt such joy at seeing myself thus engaged that it has lasted ever since.”

The little Monastery of Paray had been now founded forty-five years when it opened its doors

to Margaret Mary in her twenty-third year, on the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, the 25th of May, 1671. It numbered at this time thirty-three Choir Sisters, three Lay Sisters, and three Novices. Sixteen years after the foundation of the Order of the Visitation, and when already a considerable number of Houses were flourishing in the larger towns of France, Fr. Paul de Barry, of the Society of Jesus, effected the establishment of a Community in the little City of Paray. His object was to provide a means of counteracting the ravages made by Calvinism, and he suggested to the inhabitants of Paray that there could be none more effectual than the establishment amongst them of a House of the Daughters of the Visitation, whose lives were designed to reflect the gentleness and humility of our Divine Lord. Fr. de Barry, having interested the inhabitants in his pious design, availed himself of the influence of Madame de Ragny, with her husband, at that time Governor of Charolais, to carry it into effect. All obstacles were removed, and on the 4th of September, 1626, a little colony of Visitandines, from the Monastery of Bellecour, at Lyons, came and planted themselves at Paray. They were severely tried by poverty soon after their first settlement ; so much so that the holy Foundress feared at one time that she should be obliged to recall her Daughters, so wholly

unprovided were they with support. But the adorable providence of our Lord had designs of signal mercy upon this house ; and forty-five years later it received within its walls Margaret Mary, who was chosen by Him to become the Apostle of His Sacred Heart.

Margaret Mary was impressed, on her entrance into the monastery, with the one thought that she was to give herself up unreservedly to our Lord. "I felt at once," she says, "engraved on my soul that this house of God was a holy place ; that all who dwelt in it ought to be saints ; and that the very name of Holy Mary signified to me that I must be so at any price ; that I ought with this view to abandon myself to God without hesitation, and sacrifice myself to Him without reserve. This thought made all sweet to me that appeared hard in the beginning."

She was awakened every morning for some days by the following words, which she heard distinctly, without, however, being able to understand their meaning : "Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity,"* with the rest of the verse. At other times : "Hearken, O daughter, and see,"† &c., &c. ; and also the following : "Thou hast recognized thy path and thy way, O Jerusalem, house of Israel ; the Lord shall guide thee in all thy ways, and shall never

* Ps. xliv. 8.

† Ps. xliv. 11.

abandon thee." "I gave with simplicity an account of all this," she says, "to my good Mistress. I looked upon her, as also upon my Mother Superior, as my Jesus upon earth."

The Mistress of Novices at the time that Margaret Mary entered the Monastery of Paray was Sister Anne Frances Thouvant. She had been the first to take the habit in the Community of Paray, and when quite a young Professed she had attracted the attention of St. Jane Frances de Chantal on her different visits to Paray. The virtues which adorned her long career of religious life showed the justice of discernment which characterized the sainted Foundress. At the time our Lord conducted Margaret Mary to Paray, Sister Anne Frances Thouvant, besides being Mistress of Novices, was also Assistant and Councillor. After forty-four years of religious profession, during which she had been four times named Mother Superior, she had the privilege of being entrusted with the charge of Blessed Margaret Mary in her Noviceship. The Mother Superior at this time was Mother Margaret Jeronima Hersant. She was distinguished, as the records of her religious Sisters tell us, by a great love of God, a tender charity for her neighbor, and a profound humility, and was regarded in the different monasteries in which she lived as a saint.

Margaret Mary felt all the happiness of that

true liberty which our Lord had provided for her by enabling her to live under obedience in Religion ; and she accordingly gave herself up wholly to the practice of this virtue. The instructions of her Mother Superior and of her Mistress she regarded as the voice of our Lord Himself, and she feared nothing as long as she acted under obedience. She had an opportunity of experiencing the blessing which our Lord attaches to the practice of this humble submission on occasion of asking her Mistress instructions on the subject of prayer. Margaret had to assure her Mistress that she did not know how to make it ; “for she could not believe,” she says, “that having entered Religion at the age of twenty-three, I should be ignorant of it.” Her Mistress, whether to try her obedience, or perhaps having reason to think that she had already another Instructor, told her, “Go and place yourself before our Lord as a blank canvas before a painter.” “I could have wished,” says Margaret, “that she had explained her injunction to me more fully, for I did not understand it, and I did not dare to tell her so. But I heard internally these words, ‘Come, and I will teach you.’ And in fact, no sooner did I kneel down to pray than my Sovereign Master showed me that my soul was the canvas on which He would paint all the features of His life, which had passed in love and privation, in action and

silence, and was consummated at last in sacrifice; that He would impress the same on my soul after He had purified me from all the blemishes which remained in me, whether from affection to earthly things, or from the love of myself and creatures, towards which my good-natured disposition gave me a considerable inclination. At the same time, He stripped me of all affection, and having emptied my heart, and left my soul as it were entirely naked, He enkindled in it so ardent a desire of loving Him, and of suffering, that He gave me no rest, pursuing me so close that I had no time to think of anything but how I might love Him by crucifying myself."

Perhaps our Lord made known to Margaret on this occasion the many opportunities of suffering with which He provided her during her life, and which it will be seen were almost constant.

After being thus instructed by our Lord in the school of prayer, Margaret received at this time from her holy Founder a lesson in obedience, which virtue, as it lies at the foundation of all religious life, is intimately united with those of meekness and humility, which are specially characteristic of the Order of the Visitation. She had received permission from her Mistress for the practice of some penance, but she was inclined to carry it out in a manner which went

beyond her intention. "As I was intending to put this into execution," she says, "my holy Founder reproved me so severely, that I never afterwards dared resume it." "What! my Daughter," he said to her, "do you think to please God in passing the bounds of obedience, which, and not austerities, is the principal foundation of this Congregation?" "These words," she says, "have ever remained engraved on my heart."

We may notice here what is the opinion which was formed of the natural character and disposition of Margaret Mary by those who had the best opportunities of appreciating them. According to the account of the Reverend Mother Greyfié, under whom, as her Mother Superior, Margaret lived for six years, from 1678 to 1684, she was by nature possessed of a good judgment and discretion, of a good understanding, of a gentle and agreeable disposition, and of an extremely charitable heart. In a word, it might be said of her, that she was singularly calculated to succeed in anything, had not our Lord listened to her request to be allowed to remain unknown and hidden in abjection and suffering.* Fr. Croiset also, who was acquainted with her, says: "God had given her considerable understanding,

* *Memoirs of Blessed Margaret Mary.* By the Rev. Mother Greyfié.

a solid, clear, and penetrating judgment, a noble soul, and a large heart."*

It was evident, on Margaret's first entering on religious life, that her Divine Spouse was Himself conducting her in the way of perfection. Never had there been seen in a Postulant a combination of so many rare qualities. And yet these presented but a faint sketch of the virtues which manifested themselves in her on her being clothed with the holy habit, three months after her entrance, on the 25th of August. Our Lord gave her to understand that from this time He took a new possession of her heart, and that He asserted a fresh claim upon her love of preference for Him. "Having passed my probation," she says, "with an ardent desire of seeing myself wholly consecrated to God, and being clothed with our holy habit, my Divine Master explained to me that it was the time of our espousals, which gave Him new dominion over me, and imposed upon me a double engagement of loving Him with a love of preference. And He gave me to understand that, after the manner of the most passionate lovers, He would make me taste at the commencement all that was most charming in the sweetness of His love."

The spiritual consolations which she experi-

* *Abridgement of the Life of Blessed Margaret Mary.*

enced were so great that they almost deprived her of the power of action, and filled her with confusion. This brought upon her many a severe rebuke, for she was told that such a mode of proceeding was foreign to the spirit of the Order, which admitted of nothing that was extraordinary. "I was reprovèd," she says, "for manifesting such dispositions, and I was told that such was not the spirit of the Daughters of Holy Mary, which would have nothing extraordinary, and that, if I did not get out of this state, I could not be received to my Profession." "This plunged me," she says, "into great desolation. I made every exertion, and spared no effort, to draw myself out of this way; but all my efforts were useless." Her Mistress also on her part labored to the same end, though Margaret was unconscious of the design she had in view. Finding that Margaret had an extraordinary desire to learn how to pray, and yet, whatever effort she made, could not follow the method taught her, but would always, in spite of every exertion to the contrary, return to that taught her by her Divine Master, she appointed her assistant to a Sister in her office, by whom she was employed in working during the whole time of prayer. "After this," continues Margaret, "on my going to ask my Mistress permission to resume it, she dismissed me harshly, telling me that I

made my prayer in doing the work of the Noviceship." "This I discharged," she says, "without its being able to distract me from the sweet joy and consolation which my soul enjoyed, and which I felt increase every day. I was ordered, after hearing the points of the morning Meditation, to go out and sweep the part of the court marked out for me until Prime. After Prime I had to give an account of my prayer, or rather of that which my Sovereign Master made within me. In all this, as I had no other view but to obey, I felt interiorly an extreme pleasure, whatever was the pain I suffered in consequence in my body. So great was the joy with which I was transported that I could not refrain from singing—

Plus l'on contredit mon amour,
Plus cet unique bien m'enflamme ;
Que l'on m'afflige nuit et jour,
On ne peut l'ôter à mon âme.
Plus je souffrirai de douleur,
Plus je m'unirai à son cœur.*

* It is difficult to express in a translation the **simpli-**
city of the original.





CHAPTER VI.

1671.

IT was the voice of our Divine Lord Himself, as we have seen, that led Margaret Mary by a mysterious attraction to the Order of the Visitation. It was to a Daughter of St. Francis of Sales, whose own life reflected so strongly the gentleness and humility of the Heart of Jesus, and who had established his Order especially to exhibit these his favorite virtues in action, that our Lord would confide the mission of establishing the Devotion to His Sacred Heart.

And yet, so extraordinary were the graces by which our Lord communicated Himself to the Apostle of His Sacred Heart, and prepared her for her privileged task, that the very Devotion itself, which was to form the glory of the Order, found a difficulty for a time in making its claims recognized, from a fear that it was at variance with the simplicity of the Institute.

Hence it is interesting to trace the historical and vital connection between the Order of the Visitation and the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord.

The name of St. Francis of Sales recalls the

thought of those virtues which our Lord has told us are especially to be learnt in the school of His Sacred Heart. And as they set their stamp upon his actions, so they breathe their spirit throughout his writings. It was in the Sacred Heart of our Lord that he made his abode, and it was from thence that he drew that charity which distinguished him in his dealings with others. "How good our Lord is!" he writes to St. Jane Frances de Chantal, "how amiable is His Heart! Let us take up our abode in this holy dwelling. May His Heart ever live in our hearts."* "The other day," he writes again, "as I was in prayer, and was contemplating the opened Side of our Lord, and looking upon His Heart, I bethought me that our hearts were gathered all around It, and paid homage to It as the Sovereign King of Hearts."†

It is of the virtues of the Sacred Heart that he ever speaks in his conferences with his Daughters, for it was to honor the Heart of Jesus by the practice of his favorite virtues of meekness and humility that he instituted his Order of the Visitation. "To attain the end for which our Congregation of the Visitation was instituted," are the terms in which he addresses them, "and in order to understand more

* *Letters of St. Francis of Sales.* Bk. i., lett. 64.

† *Letters.* Bk. iv., lett. 101.

easily what is the peculiar spirit of the Visitation, I have always considered that it was a spirit of profound humility towards God, and of great gentleness towards our neighbor." Such is the perfection which he proposes to his Daughters of the Visitation. "Their hands are employed," he says, "only in gathering at the foot of the Cross the little virtues of humility, gentleness, and simplicity, which grow there, and are bedewed with the Blood of their Beloved, fastened by nails to their hearts as He is upon the Cross." *

Whilst the interior spirit of the Daughters of the Visitation is drawn from the Heart of Jesus, the very emblem which distinguishes the Order, given to them by their holy Founder himself, expresses the same truth. The history of its origin is remarkable; for it seems to show that long before the revelation of the Devotion to his holy Daughter, he had seen it in a manner embodied, and was able to present it to his Children under a form closely resembling that in which it was subsequently manifested by our Lord Himself to Blessed Margaret Mary.

One morning in June, in the year 1611, the holy Bishop, detained at home by business, took up his pen to communicate to St. Jane Frances

** Spirit of the Religious of the Visitation of Holy Mary. Explained by the Venerable Servant of God, Francis of Sales. Paris, 1657.*

de Chantal the thoughts with which he had been inspired during the preceding night.

“Good morning, my dear Daughter,” he writes. “An arrangement which I have to make this morning between two of our Pastors of Gex, deprives me of the consolation of going to see my dear flock and of feeding them myself with the Bread of Life. M. Rolland* must supply in my absence. He cannot, however, convey to you as I could wish the thought with which Almighty God inspired me last night. It is this: that our House of the Visitation has now, by His grace, attained sufficient nobility to have its own arms, crest, and device. I have thought, then, my dear Mother, if you agree with me, that we should take for our armorial bearings a heart pierced by two arrows and encircled by a crown of thorns; this poor heart serving as a base for a cross surmounting it, and bearing engraved upon it the holy name of Jesus and Mary. I will tell you, my Daughter, when we next meet, a number of thoughts which have occurred to me on this subject; for, indeed, our little Congregation is the work of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Our Divine Saviour when dying gave us birth by the opening of His Sacred Heart; it is but just, then, that our hearts, by the practice of constant mortifica-

* The confidential servant of St. Francis of Sales.

tion, should be always encircled by the crown of thorns which rested on the Head of our Lord, whilst His love held Him fast upon the throne of His mortal anguish.

“Good morning, my Daughter, for I see our litigants are coming to break in upon our peaceful thoughts.”*

Who can fail to see here a foreshadowing of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart embodied in this beautiful emblem, which still serves to record to the Daughters of the Visitation the thoughts of their holy Founder regarding the Sacred Heart? And so faithfully did his Daughters express in their lives that character which he had set before them, that in 1657—between forty and fifty years later—the Bishop of Puy was able publicly to claim for them, in his *Life of St. Francis of Sales*, the title of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart. In this work, dedicated to Pope Alexander VII., who shortly afterwards pronounced the beatification and canonization of the Saint, he declares, in the language of the Saint himself, that “they were established especially in this last age to be the imitators of the two virtues dearest to the Sacred Heart of the Incarnate Word, which serve as the base and foundation of their Order, and

* From the collection of letters of St. Francis of Sales preserved in the Monastery of the Visitation at Pignerol

give them the privilege and incomparable favor of bearing the character of Daughters of the Heart of Jesus.*

The same sentiment we find constantly living in the minds of the most gifted of the Order. Such was the Mother Anne Margaret Clement, who died in the odor of sanctity in 1661, in the Monastery of Melun, which she had founded. This holy Religious, whose life was written by Father Augustine Galice, afterwards General of the Barnabites, was in the habit of saying that her Blessed Father had made his dwelling in the Heart of Jesus, and that as Moses by his converse with God became the mildest of men, "so her Blessed Father by his familiar intercourse with his Beloved attained to the perfection of the two virtues of the Heart of Jesus—humility and gentleness." She added that this holy law-giver had been inspired to found an Order in the Church to honor the Adorable Heart of Jesus Christ and His two dearest virtues, which are the foundation of the rules and constitutions of the Visitation.†

* *Life of the Venerable Servant of God, Francis of Sales, Bishop and Prince of Geneva.* By Messire Henry de Maupas du Tour, Bishop and Lord of Puy, &c. P. 310. Paris, 1657.

† *Life of the Ven. Mother Anne Margaret Clement, &c.* Paris, 1686. The work bears the approbation of the illustrious Cardinal Bona.

The last testimony which we will quote is that of Jane Benigne Gojos, a simple Lay Sister of the Monastery of Turin. Received into the Noviceship by the Mother de Chantal, in 1638, she was towards the close of her long life contemporary with Margaret Mary, and survived her by two years. She had, however, no communication with her, and it is possible, considering the distance by which she was separated from her, that she died without having heard her name. Supernaturally enlightened, however, she announced in 1687 the important mission which Blessed Margaret Mary was called to fulfil in the Church. In speaking of the first Mothers of the Order, she would say that they were "true Daughters of the Heart of Jesus, gentle, humble, all love for God, and all charity for their neighbor." *

We see, then, how the Order of the Visitation, to which Margaret Mary was so mysteriously called, whatever was the opposition and trial which she met with in it, was prepared from its first institution for receiving the Devotion which she was chosen by our Lord to introduce.

The Order of the Visitation was itself the first

* *The Charm of Divine Love ; or, the Life of the devout Sister Jane Benigne Gojos, &c.* By Mother Mary Geltrude Provane de Leyni, Religious of the same Order in 1693. Turin, 1846.

to experience the saving power of the important mission it accepted and so faithfully discharged. It was preserved by it amidst perils under which many religious congregations sank, and it has been the means of communicating its blessings throughout the Church at large.





CHAPTER VII.

1671—1672.

THE spirit of prayer is necessarily united with the desire of mortification. For as prayer is an exercise of union with God, the soul, in its desire to attain a more perfect union, feels itself obliged to clear itself as far as it can of those obstacles which the earthly tendencies of human nature place in the way of this union. Hence, whilst our Lord united Margaret Mary so closely to Himself by prayer, He inspired her at the same time with a great desire of mortification. Though, from the warmth and tenderness of her natural disposition, she felt humiliations very sensibly, our Lord constantly urged her to ask for them; and at times she received some which obliged her to have recourse to Him for His special assistance to enable her to bear them. "Though I was refused those which I asked for," she says, "I received others which I did not expect, and which were so opposed to my own inclination that I was forced to say to my good Master, owing to the violence I was obliged to do to myself, 'Do Thou, O Lord, come to my assistance, for it is Thou Who art the cause of

this.' He did so, and said to me, 'Acknowledge, then, that you can do nothing without Me. My assistance shall never be wanting to you, provided that you always keep your own nothingness and weakness buried in My strength.'"

One of these occasions of mortifying herself, and which appeared beyond her strength, is mentioned in particular by Margaret Mary. The matter appears trifling in itself, but it involved under the circumstances so great an act of self-denial, that it led, by the conquest which she gained over herself, to her receiving extraordinary graces from our Lord. Margaret Mary had, in common with all her family, so strong a natural antipathy to cheese, that her brother had made it a condition upon her entering the convent, before signing the contract, that she should never be required to eat it. To this of course no difficulty was made. Now, however, she was attacked upon this point as a mark of singularity. Our Lord perhaps wished to test in this manner the strength of her love, and to manifest at the same time the truth of those singular graces He bestowed upon her by enabling her for the love of Him to triumph over this strong natural repugnance. She was pressed so strongly on this point that she did not know what to do. We may judge how strong on the other hand was the natural an-

tipathy against which she had to contend by the expressions she uses regarding it. "On the one hand," she says, "it seemed to me that the sacrifice of my life would have been a thousand times easier than to do this, and had I not cherished my vocation dearer than my life, I would rather have abandoned it than make up my mind to do what was required of me. On the other hand, I felt that my Sovereign Lord wished this sacrifice of me, for on it depended so many others."

She was engaged in this struggle for three days; and it was so violent as to excite the compassion of all who witnessed it, and especially of her Mistress. She presented herself before her Mistress to do what was required of her, when her courage failed, and she was ready to die of grief to think that she was not able to overcome this natural aversion. "Alas!" she said to her Mistress, "would that I might rather lose my life than fail in obedience!" On this her Mistress sent her away, telling her that she was not worthy to practice this act of obedience, and that she should not be allowed now to do what had been ordered. "This was enough for me," she remarks, "and I said at once, I must either conquer or die." She then went before the Blessed Sacrament, her ordinary recourse in her difficulties, and remained there three or four hours, weeping and groaning, in order that she

might obtain strength to overcome herself. "Alas, my God!" she said, "hast Thou abandoned me? Must there, then, be any reserve in my sacrifice, and shall not all be consumed as a perfect holocaust?" "My Divine Master," she says, "wishing to test to the utmost the fidelity of my love towards Him, as He afterwards gave me to understand, took pleasure in seeing divine love combat in His unworthy slave against the repugnance of nature. But love at last was victorious; for without any other consolation or arms than these words, 'There must be no reserve in love,' I went and cast myself on my knees before my Mistress, begging of her in mercy to allow me to do what she had desired of me. At length I did it, though I have never felt such repugnance to anything, and this recommenced every time that I had to do it. This continued for about eight years."

This sacrifice was followed by such overflowing graces that she was often obliged to exclaim, "Stop, O my God, this torrent in which I am lost, or give me greater power to support it!" "I omit to mention here," she says, "all the profusion of divine grace with which I was visited, for it was so great that I could not express it."

Margaret Mary had to conquer herself on another point on which she was exposed to difficulty from her natural warmth of heart. She

had passed some months of her Noviceship without being able to detach herself from a particular affection which she entertained for one of the Community, and which placed considerable hindrance in the way of those graces which our Lord designed to confer upon her. She was reproved for this several times by our Lord, and she had not yet been induced to correct it. One evening, as she was at prayer, He reproached her, saying that He did not wish for a divided heart, and that if she did not withdraw from creatures, He would withdraw from her. She felt this reproach so keenly, that she took the final resolution of correcting herself, and earnestly begged of our Lord to give her the power of loving only Him.

Our Lord, after manifesting to her her weakness, disclosed to her the source whence she was to derive all her strength. Thus, taught by her own experience, she was better able to lead others to have recourse in all their difficulties to His Sacred Heart.

On one occasion, as she felt a difficulty in submitting herself, our Lord showed her His Sacred Body, covered with Wounds which He had suffered for love of her, and reproached her with her ingratitude and cowardice in not overcoming herself for love of Him. "What wouldst Thou have me do, O my God?" she said; "my will is stronger than myself." Our Lord told

her that if she placed it in the Wound of His Sacred Side she would no longer find any difficulty in overcoming herself. "Place it there, then, O my Saviour," she replied, "and enclose it there so securely that it may never more escape from thence." She declared that from that moment everything appeared to her so easy that she had no longer any difficulty in overcoming herself.

Besides giving her His Heart as a source of strength, our Lord would also lead her to It as an oratory in which she might find recollection of soul and a secret charm which would deprive all worldly objects of their attraction; as a place of refuge also in which she might be secure against the disturbance of the world. He often told her that she should make an interior solitude in her heart, where He wished that she should faithfully bear Him company, and where He would teach her to love Him. She could no longer find any pleasure, she tells us, but in this sweet converse with our Lord, and whatever was the occupation she was engaged in, nothing could disturb the loving repose she found in God, Who was alone all-sufficient for her.

This grace manifested its divine origin by the humility with which it inspired her. She saw in her own actions only infidelity, ingratitude, abuse of graces, and loss of time; though her

Sisters who have lived with her formed a **very** different judgment of them.*

Together with the graces which our Lord communicated to her for herself, He began to prepare her also for the office for which He destined her, of making reparation for others. One day, whilst making her thanksgiving after Holy Communion, and desiring to do something for God, our Lord asked her interiorly if she would

* The following are the depositions made by some of the Sisters in the juridical process in 1715. Sister Catherine Augustine Marest said that, "having known the Venerable Margaret Mary before she took the holy habit of Religion, she observed in her, even whilst she was yet in the world, a modesty and recollection, a great desire of giving herself to God, and other virtues suited to a good Religious. Her zeal increased the longer she lived in Religion; she was always one of the first at the Divine Office, the Community exercises, and the employments in which she was engaged by obedience." Sister Jane Mary Contois adds that she saw her at her entrance into the Noviceship. She manifested, she says, an extraordinary joy and fervor. Her Mistress, observing this, tried her in preference to others with many mortifications and humiliations, which she received without reply or excuse, wearing always a happy and cheerful look. Sister Anne Alexis de Maréchalles observed that the Venerable Margaret Mary manifested a strong attachment to the regular exercises of the Community, and arranged her time, as far as she could, so as to spend it before the Blessed

not be happy to suffer all the pains which sinners deserved, in order that He might be glorified in so many souls. "Upon this I offered Him," she says, "my soul and my whole being in sacrifice to do His Divine will. Even though these pains were to last to the day of judgment, I should be content, provided He were glorified thereby."

Our Lord explained Himself still more clearly to her on the following occasion, in which He set before her the work of charity which He designed her to fulfil. Whilst at prayer one evening, as she begged of Him to let her know

Sacrament, for which she had an extraordinary love. She endeavored to secure the happiness of receiving It as often as she could. When any of the Sisters happened to be absent in their regular turn, the Mother Superior always appointed Sister Alacoque to take their place, knowing her to be always ready to receive Holy Communion. Though often ill, she did all in her power, on the days on which she was to communicate, to avoid taking anything, in order that she might not be prevented receiving her Divine Master. This desire of receiving Him made her so attentive to lead a pure life that she watched herself in the smallest particulars. She joined little in conversation, except when it turned on God, or some very edifying subject. If the subject changed she showed a particular tact in bringing it back upon God, and she spoke with such readiness and unction that all who heard her derived the greatest edification.

what means she had of satisfying her desire of loving Him, our Lord gave her to understand that she could not better testify her love than by loving her neighbor for the love of Him. He taught her that she should employ herself in procuring the salvation of sinners and that of her Sisters, though herself the most miserable of all, and that she should forget her own interests for theirs in all that she had it in her power to do. He explained to her that it was the re-establishment of charity in hearts that He asked for; for it was by failing in it that they had separated themselves from Him who is charity itself; that both Religious persons and persons in the world feared not, by their faults, to wound charity, that divine virtue which takes its rise in the Heart of God Himself. "It is these members," He added, "already half corrupted and ready to be cut off, which cause Me such great pain. They would already," He said, "have received their punishment, were it not for the devotion they have towards My holy Mother, who appeases My offended justice, which can only be satisfied by the sacrifice of a victim." "I was touched by this so powerfully," she says, "that I would gladly have accepted every kind of torment, even the pains of purgatory to the day of judgment, to satisfy His goodness." "But let me know, O my God," she said to Him, "what it is that has offended Thy justice." He

told her that it was sins, hidden indeed from the eyes of creatures, but which could not be hidden from His. He gave her to understand afterwards that He was greatly pleased with the care and pains which Superiors took for the re-establishment of charity in their Community, and that it should not go unrewarded ; but that, if there were no amendment, His mercy would withdraw itself to leave His justice to act, for charity is the character and true spirit of the Daughters of St. Francis of Sales.

Her holy Founder also encouraged her to undertake the work of charity designed for her. It seemed to her that she saw him saying to our Divine Lord that he would wish to be able to do penance even to the day of judgment for all his Daughters.

To animate her the more with the spirit of charity which she was to draw from His Sacred Heart, our Lord continued to strengthen her love of prayer. The attraction she felt for it increased every day, and she gave to it every moment she could command. As our Lord had already raised her to so high a prayer that she was in a manner absorbed in the thought of Him, the devil, who understands well the value of the union of the soul with God, did not fail to endeavor to disturb her in it, by his subtle fallacies and false suggestions. He endeavored to persuade her that she was losing her time in it,

because, unable often to apply her thoughts to the subject she had proposed to herself, she felt her heart lost, as it were, in the presence of God, without any other movement or affection but that of loving, with a great desire of suffering something for the love of Him. The following expressions into which she would break forth may serve to represent to us the prevailing disposition of her soul in prayer. "It is enough for me, my Beloved," she would say, "to be as Thou desirest." At other times, "O how beautiful is the Beloved of my soul! why cannot I love Him?" She was unable to pray in any other way because, as we have seen, our Lord would be Himself her Master, and had raised her to this high kind of prayer, which would seem to be what is described by St. Teresa as the prayer of Quiet, or of Union. We are not to understand from this that those who are desirous of advancing in the practice of prayer should not be careful in preparing the subject of their prayer, and faithful in keeping to it. It is for them to be faithful to such points on their parts, and to leave it to Almighty God to bestow upon them such gifts in prayer as He shall be pleased to favor them with.

Margaret Mary found her delight in this union with God. "There was no time," she says, "more agreeable to me than the night, as being the best suited to converse with my Beloved.

I therefore begged of my good Angel sometimes to awaken me. At these times I felt my heart wholly filled with God, whose converse was so sweet to me that I often passed three hours without any other movement or sentiment but that of love, and without its being in my power to fall asleep again."

Our Lord would have her join bodily mortification with the sweets of prayer. "I could not rest on my left side," she says, "as I was unable in that position to breathe. On one occasion, when I wished to turn to relieve my shoulder, which gave me pain, He told me that when He carried His cross He did not change it from side to side, in order to find relief. By this I understood that He wished me to retrench every kind of comfort."

As the time of her Profession approached, Margaret Mary was attacked anew on the subject of the extraordinary graces she received, and her manner of prayer. She was told that it was evident she was unsuited to the Order of the Visitation, the spirit of which was averse to such extraordinary ways, so liable to illusions. "I represented to my Sovereign Lord," she says, "these reproaches which I received, and made my complaint to Him, saying: 'Wilt Thou, then, O Lord, be the cause of my being sent away?' I received from Him the following reply: 'Tell your Mother Superior,' He said,

‘that she has nothing to fear in receiving you, and that it is I who give her this assurance.’” On her reporting this to her Mother Superior, she ordered her to ask of our Lord, in proof of His will, to make her useful to the Order by an exact observance of all its rules. “Upon this, His loving goodness replied to me,” she says: “‘Well, My Daughter, I grant you what you ask. I will make you more useful to the Order than they suppose, but in a manner which as yet is known only to Me, and from henceforth I will adapt My graces to the spirit of your Rule, to the will of your Superiors, and to your own weakness; so that you may look with suspicion upon anything which withdraws you from the exact observance of your Rule, which I would have you prefer to all else. Moreover, I am content that you prefer the will of your Superiors to Mine, when they forbid you to do what I have ordered you. Leave them to do what they please with you. I shall know how to make My designs succeed even by the very means which seem opposed to them. I reserve to Myself the conduct of your interior, and especially of your heart, in which I have established the reign of My pure love, and I will never resign it to another.’”

The Mother Superior and the Mistress of Novices expressed their satisfaction, and the effects they witnessed in Margaret Mary left

them no doubt of the truth of the communication. "I attached myself then wholly," says Margaret Mary, "to the practice of obedience, with great interior peace, whatever it cost me to obey."

Her obedience, humility, and mortification, won for her the esteem of all ; and it was by the unanimous votes of the Community that she was judged worthy to be admitted to her holy Profession. But so closely was her heart united to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and so wholly was she absorbed in the thought of God, that the esteem with which she was regarded was a source of suffering to her from the knowledge she had of herself. "The esteem which they manifested towards me," she says, "and the regard in which I was held, were an insupportable martyrdom to me. I looked upon them as a just punishment of my sins, which appeared to me so great that every imaginable torment would have seemed light to me for the expiation of them, and to make satisfaction to the divine justice."

Four days before her Profession, November 2d, 1672, as she was praying to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and expressing her desire to make Him amends for the manner in which she had abused His graces, both in the sacraments and in prayer, she made an entire sacrifice of herself to His divine will, begging Him

to receive it as a holocaust and to unite it to the Sacrifice He had made of Himself to His Eternal Father. Our Lord replied to her : " Remember that it is a crucified God whom you wish to espouse ; you must therefore make yourself like to Him, and bid adieu to all the pleasures of life, for there will be no longer any for you but such as are marked with the Cross." As she regarded our Divine Lord upon the Cross, He told her to fasten herself to the cross which He should give her, and that it should be so heavy a one, that were she not supported by His almighty arm it would be impossible for her to bear it.

She had constant opportunities of putting in practice the sacrifice of herself ; for as she was continually united with God in prayer, no occasion was lost of humbling her, in order that it might appear clearly by the application of this sure test that her extraordinary gifts really came from God.

In the enclosure adjoining the kitchen-garden of the monastery was kept an ass with her foal. The Novices had received instructions to see that these animals did not make their way into the garden. Margaret Mary, in the simplicity of her fervent obedience, regarded this instruction as addressed personally to herself, and never failed to be at her post except when engaged in the choir. Her charge, as may be

supposed, kept her in constant exercise throughout the day. The time for her Retreat before her Profession having come, she thought, as she had received no instructions to the contrary, that she still ought to continue her charge ; and her Superiors, in secret admiration of her uninterrupted union with God, and desirous of seeing how far her obedience would carry her, allowed her to take her own way. She appeared as recollected whilst employed in this exercise as in the time of prayer. One day, we are told, as she was going to break off the converse with our Divine Lord with which He was favoring her, in order to attend to her charge, He said to her, "Leave them alone, they will do no harm ;" and, though the animals were seen by the Community loose in the garden, upon examination of the ground no trace of any injury could be discovered.

She was desired by her Mother Superior, at a later period of her life, to give an account in writing of the reflections she had made during this time, and of the graces she had received from our Lord. "My Divine Master," she says, "kept me faithful company during the time that I was obliged to be unceasingly on the move. During this time I received such great graces that I had never before received any like them, especially regarding the mystery of His Passion. But I omit all, it being too long to write. I will

only say that it is this which has given me so great a love of the Cross that I cannot live a moment without suffering, suffering in silence without consolation or relief, and dying with the Sovereign Lord of my soul. This has continued during my whole life, which by His mercy has passed in exercises of this kind ; that is to say, in the exercise of pure love. He has always taken such care to furnish me abundantly with this food, so delightful to His taste, that He never says, 'It is enough.' In the evenings, though greatly fatigued and wearied, I enjoyed such peace, that my only uneasiness was lest I should not love my God enough. I passed the whole night in such thoughts."

The following are the resolutions which Margaret Mary made during this Retreat, and which she says were dictated to her by our Lord Himself. They were to form the dispositions in which she was to make her holy Profession, and were to serve as the rule of all her life. We see by them how she was directed by our Lord to His Sacred Heart as the source of her strength, and of those sentiments by which she was to live His life. "After I had received my Beloved," she says, "into my heart, He said to me, 'Behold the Wound in My Side, wherein you are to make your abode both now and for ever. Here you will be able to preserve the robe of innocence with which I have clothed

you, in order that you may live from henceforth the life of a Man-God. Live as no longer living, in order that I may live perfectly in you. Think of your body, and of all that may befall it, as though it existed no longer. Act as if you no longer acted, but I alone in you. To this end all your powers and senses must be buried in Me. You must be deaf, dumb, blind, and insensible to all earthly objects. You must will as no longer willing ; you must be without judgment, desire, affection, or any other will but that of My good pleasure, which should form all your delight. Seek nothing out of Me unless you would do injury to My power, and offend Me grievously, since I wish to be all to you.

“Be ever ready to receive Me ; I shall always be ready to give Myself to you. You will often be delivered to the fury of your enemies ; but fear nothing. I will encompass you with My power, and will be Myself the reward of your victories. Be careful never to regard yourself out of Me. Let your motto be, “To love and suffer blindly.” “One only heart, one only love, one God alone.””

Margaret Mary added in her own blood : “I, a poor miserable nothing, protest to my God that I will offer and sacrifice myself to all that He asks of me, offering my heart wholly to the accomplishment of His good pleasure, without regard to any other interest than that of His

greater glory and His pure love. To this I consecrate and give my whole being and every moment of my life. I belong forever to my Beloved, as His slave, His handmaid, and His creature. He is wholly mine, and I am His unworthy Spouse, Sister Margaret Mary, dead henceforth to the world. Wholly from God, and nothing from myself; wholly to God, and nothing to myself; wholly for God, and nothing for myself."

It was in these sentiments that Margaret Mary made her Profession on the 6th of November, 1672. "On this day," she says, "my Divine Lord was pleased to receive me as His Spouse in a manner I am unable to express. I will only say that He treated me as a Spouse of Thabor.* And yet I felt this harder on the other hand than death, seeing in myself no

* Although our Lord favored Margaret Mary with so much sweetness on the day of her Profession, He did not however leave her, even on this occasion, without some taste of the Cross. In her writings we find the following account:—"Ever since I have had the happiness of being the Spouse of a crucified God, I never remember to have been without the livery of the Cross which I love so much, beginning with the day of my Profession, on which I received a cross which I felt very sensibly, according to nature; but I declare that I can never sufficiently admire the goodness of my God."

resemblance to my Spouse, whom I beheld all disfigured and torn upon Calvary. But He said to me, 'Leave Me to act; everything has its time. I would have you at present the sport of My love. You are to abandon yourself wholly to My will, blindly and without resistance, allowing Me to execute My good pleasure at your expense. But you will lose nothing thereby.' He promised that He would never leave me. 'Be ever ready,' He said, 'to receive Me, for henceforth I will make My abode in you, and will converse and entertain Myself with you.'" Our Lord allowed her to enjoy continually His divine presence, "in a manner," she says, "which I had never before experienced. I have never received so great a grace, if I am to judge by the effects which it has ever since produced in me. I perceived Him quite close to me, and heard His voice much better than if it had been by the bodily senses. For in that case I could have distracted myself had I pleased; but as it was, I could not place any hindrance in the way of this impression, which I had no share in producing in myself."

This interior Vision of our Blessed Lord with which Margaret Mary was favored appears to be of that kind which is described by St. Teresa as one of the most sublime, and one in which, as she was assured by St. Peter of Alcantara, the devil has the least power of taking any part.

"It seemed to me," she says in describing it, "that our Lord was constantly at my side, though, as there was no image, I could not distinguish Him under any form. But I felt clearly that He was constantly at my side on my right hand, and that He was witness of all I did. So that whenever I recollected myself a little, or was not altogether distracted, I could not but know that He was close to me. I did not indeed see anything," she says, "either with the eyes of my body or those of my soul; but it seemed to me that our Lord was close to me, and I knew, as it seemed to me, that it was He Himself who had spoken to me on other occasions. The soul knows," as she further explains it, "what is presented to her by a light brighter than that of the sun. I do not say that one sees either the sun or any particular brightness, but it is a light without light, which illumines the understanding and renders it capable of enjoying so great a good, which is attended by so many others." She distinguishes the knowledge given by this interior Vision from that sense of the presence of God which she says is not unfrequently felt by persons who are favored with the prayer of Quiet and Union, and by which, as soon as they enter on prayer, they seem to find Him with whom they wish to converse. In that the soul is assured of the presence of God only by the

interior effects which His graces produce within her ; but here the soul knows clearly, as she describes it, that Jesus Christ, the son of the Blessed Virgin, is present. "In the former manner of prayer," she says, "the soul simply feels and receives some influence of the Divinity, here she moreover sees that the most sacred Humanity of our Lord holds her company, and condescends at the same time to favor her with His graces."

"This divine presence," says Margaret Mary, describing the effects produced upon her by this interior Vision, "impressed me with so deep a sense of self-annihilation that I felt, as it were, sunk in the abyss of my nothingness, from which I have never since been able to escape. Penetrated with respect for His infinite majesty, my own inclination would have led me to remain constantly prostrate on my face before Him, or on my knees ; and, indeed, I always took this position as far as my occupations and my weakness allowed me. His divine majesty never left me any rest in any less respectful position, so that I never dared to remain seated when alone. He impressed me with so lively a sense of my own unworthiness that I no longer cared to appear in public ; when I did so, I felt a strange confusion. I should have desired no one any longer to think of me, except to despise and humb'e me, and speak injuriously of me, for in

fact I deserved nothing else. The only Love of my soul took such pleasure in seeing me thus treated, that in spite of my natural sensibility, which arose from my proud character, He no longer allowed me to find any pleasure amongst creatures, except in occasions of humiliation, contradiction, and abjection. He wished that this should be my most delightful food, and He has never allowed me to be without it. He supplied me with it Himself when I failed to receive it from creatures, and when He did so it was in a way which I felt much more keenly. It would take me too long to explain myself further."





CHAPTER VIII.

1672.

AT the time that Margaret Mary made her Profession, the Monastery of Paray was no longer governed by the Mother Margaret Jeronima Hersant. She had been succeeded in 1672 by the Mother Mary Frances de Saumaise, Professed of Dijon. This admirable Mother Superior, whose name is so closely connected with the graces bestowed upon Blessed Margaret Mary in the revelation and promotion of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, gave indications from her earliest years of the virtues with which she was to be endowed. Born at Dijon, of good family, she was placed under the care of the Sisters of the Visitation when about eleven or twelve years of age. She then took the "little habit,"* which she quitted at the age of fifteen

*St. Frances of Sales allowed a small number of young persons, of the age of ten or twelve, who gave indications of an inclination to the religious state, to be received at the wish of their parents into the monasteries of his Order. They were to wear, at the will of the Mother Superior, a plain black dress, with a short white veil, and

to enter the Noviciate, and in the following year she made her Profession. St. Jane Frances de Chantal, in her last passage through Dijon, took notice of the young Professed, and expressed a wish to speak with her in private. She remarked in her a prudence and maturity of judgment above her years, and predicted that she would prove one day a valuable Superior of the Order. She verified the prediction of the sainted Foundress, and the Monastery of Paray was the first to experience it, receiving her as Mother Superior in the year 1672.

Margaret Mary had been now a Novice for nine months, and Mother Mary Frances was unwilling to trust her own unaided judgment in deciding upon her remarkable vocation. Before admitting her to Profession she thought it best to take the opinion of Mother Anne Seraphine Boulrier, whose merit was generally recognized in the Order, upon the extraordinary circumstances of the case. Mother Anne Seraphine, signally favored herself by our Lord, had no difficulty in satisfying the mind of the worthy

to be formed to spiritual things, according to their capacity, by a Sister of great gentleness and prudence. At the age of fifteen they were to be received, if fitted for it, to their Clothing, otherwise they were to be removed. "However, those Houses will do very well," remarks the holy Founder, "who can exempt themselves from receiving any."

Mother Superior, and inspiring her with a high esteem for the privileged soul our Lord had committed to her care. Two years later, when the still more extraordinary graces which Margaret Mary received rendered further examination necessary, Mother de Saumaise had the advantage of the prudent counsel of Fr. de La Colombière to guide her, and from that time these three privileged souls contracted an intimate union in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Mother de Saumaise, after her six years of Superiority at Paray, returned to Dijon, where she was appointed Mistress of Novices. After filling that office for a year she was chosen Mother Superior of the Monastery at Moulins. Her health required her recall to her own monastery at the end of three years, but she had taken advantage of her stay at Moulins to establish there the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. Margaret Mary maintained an intimate correspondence by letter with her friend and former Superior, who seconded her warmly in her efforts to extend the Devotion, and there is good reason to believe that she received from the Sacred Heart a lasting reward of her pious zeal. Blessed Margaret Mary was once shown in a vision twelve bright stars, which were to form forever a crown for the Sacred Heart, and Mother Mary Frances was of the number.

Margaret Mary gave her confidence at once

to her new Superior, and was treated by her in return with the true spiritual affection of a Mother. Observing in her an extraordinary love for our Blessed Lord, she co-operated with the action of divine grace, and gave her opportunities of satisfying her desire of suffering in imitation of Him. The Community witnessed with admiration the fidelity with which Margaret Mary corresponded to the abundant graces she received, and the exactness with which she carried out the injunctions of her holy Institute. She was especially distinguished, we are told by her contemporaries, by her obedience, silence, severity towards herself, simplicity, and religious poverty, which led her to conform herself, in spite of her delicate health, to the ordinary rule in respect of food and clothing, without ever complaining of what was given her for her use.

She was engaged by obedience in the various employments which form the occupations of religious life. In each she made use of her good qualities with her usual fervor, and in each she met, as may be supposed, with many opportunities of mortification and humiliation. She was placed first as assistant in the Infirmary, which was under the charge of Sister Catherine Augustine Marest. This good and devoted Sister, full of energy both of body and mind, intrepid and indefatigable in the exercise of her charge, found a contrast in the calm and gentle

sweetness and humility of Margaret Mary, constantly absorbed in the presence of God. It may be easily understood how many opportunities such a diversity of character would afford for the exercise of virtue on either side. In this, as in every other office in which obedience placed her, Margaret Mary ever took to herself whatever was most mortifying to nature. When employed in charge of the Store-room she set apart for herself what she would not have thought of offering to any one else. She had much to suffer, both from the laborious nature of her employment, in which she was unwilling ever to have any assistance, and also from not finding others as fervent or as indefatigable as herself.

She was several times Mistress of the children who were trained in the monastery. She was, as may be supposed, greatly beloved by them, for she endeavored to gain their hearts, in order to lead them to a love of the Sacred Heart of our Lord. She instilled into their minds solid principles of virtue, teaching them to act in all things from the love of God, and for no consideration whatever to consent to commit a sin. She readily pardoned them any faults they might commit, with the exception of falsehood and particular attachments. These she punished severely. She took occasion to mortify herself in attending upon the children. She

would collect for herself the pieces of bread which they left about, and would often mix water with her food, in order to make it more insipid, and in hot weather would drink warm water. She would commonly deprive herself of fresh fruit, and would eat the good and bad alike. Those who were in office with her declare that the only subject of dispute they ever had with her was to prevent her undertaking what was most troublesome and mortifying.

Indeed, she seemed to carry mortification throughout everything, and she derived from it that true life which springs from it in its perfection. She regarded sickness and health alike as a gift from Almighty God, and dying to the pleasures of sense, she found a delight in sufferings and humiliation, because they united her more closely to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and enabled her to live His life.

The love of our Blessed Lord which she derived from this mortification of herself showed itself in charity towards her neighbor. She was as gentle and forbearing towards others as she was severe towards herself. She would excuse them in such a manner as to convince them that she would gladly endure anything for them. Whatever mortification she had to endure from them, she was never heard to murmur or complain, but was ever ready to render any service to those who brought the mortification upon

her. This charity she drew from the Sacred Heart of our Lord. She would frequently say, "I do not understand how a Spouse of Jesus Christ crucified can fly from the Cross, and not rather love it ; for in flying from it she flies, at the same time, from Him who bore it for love of us, and regarded it as the object of His delight. We can love Him only as far as we love the Cross."

The more closely the soul attains to union with Almighty God, the less need does it feel of those external aids which helped it to this union. Margaret Mary had formerly taken great delight in spiritual reading. Now, on the contrary, it became a kind of torment to her. She could not apply her mind to it, for her thoughts were wholly absorbed in the consideration of our Blessed Lord, Whom she beheld present in the various mysteries of His life. All other objects alike failed to engage her attention, for all her thoughts were taken up with our Lord. The day did not appear long enough to converse with God ; hence her desire was to remain in silence, or if she had to speak she could speak only of God. All other conversation was a torture to her. "From being a great talker," she says, "I have become so ignorant that I know nothing, and do not desire to know anything but Jesus crucified." In this intimate converse with which our Lord favored her, He would

speak with her at one time as a friend, at another as her Spouse, or as a Father with a beloved child.

But she was not to receive these graces only for herself. She was to serve as a channel to communicate them to others, and it was through suffering that she was to communicate them. Hence our Lord prepared her for the sufferings she was to endure for others by allowing her on one occasion to behold in Himself a two fold sanctity, one of love and the other of justice. Both were most rigorous in their character, and both were to exert their influence continually upon her. The first, she was told, would make her suffer a kind of purgatory, most painful to bear, in order to relieve the holy souls in purgatory, who would be allowed to address themselves to her according to His good pleasure. The sanctity of justice, so terrible to sinners, she was to feel in suffering for sinners, "especially," said our Lord, "for souls consecrated to Me." "I will make you see and feel hereafter," He said, "what you must suffer for My love in this manner." We shall have occasion to see in Margaret Mary's life, and in one striking instance in particular, how this promise of our Lord was fulfilled.



CHAPTER IX.

1672 — 1673.

THE consolations with which Margaret Mary was favored were given her, as we have seen, to prepare her for suffering. In order that she might be still better prepared, our Lord inspired her with a great desire of suffering. This led her to ask Him one day, as she tells us, why it was that He left her constantly without suffering. Upon this she was shown a great cross covered with flowers. "Behold," our Lord said to her, "the couch of My chaste Spouses. It is upon this that the fire of My pure love shall consume your sacrifice. By degrees these flowers will fall away, and there will remain only the thorns which, out of regard to your weakness, are at present hidden by these flowers. But one day you shall feel their points so keenly, that you will have need of all the strength of My love to enable you to bear the pain."

We may judge of the true love of Margaret Mary for our Blessed Lord by the joy which this announcement gave her. "These words rejoiced me," she says, "as I thought I should never have enough suffering, humiliation, and

contempt, to slake the burning thirst which I had for them. It seemed to me that I could never find a greater suffering than that which I felt in not suffering." The soul must have attained to a great love of our Blessed Lord when it desires, in order to resemble Him, to suffer without consolation. "I wished," says Margaret Mary, "to have the cross, and the cross alone. I could have wished to see my body overwhelmed with austerities and labor. I took upon me as much as my strength could bear. I could not live a moment without suffering."

The sanctity of love which had been shown to her enkindled in her the desire of suffering, and led her to suffer for the suffering souls in purgatory. It enkindled, besides the desire of suffering, two other desires which constantly tormented her ; one of Holy Communion, and the other of dying in order to be united to God. "I have so great a desire," she says, "of Holy Communion that had I to walk barefoot over flames it seems to me that it would cost me nothing compared to the loss of this happiness."

It was the presence of our Blessed Lord which, as we have seen, she constantly enjoyed, that formed the secret of her strength, and enabled her to find her joy in suffering. It was this that made her happy everywhere. "Since our Lord has conferred upon me the grace," she says, "of

constantly enjoying His presence, I have felt indifferent to every arrangement which might be made concerning me. For I felt persuaded that since God had given Himself to me through the effect of His goodness, without any merit on my part, nothing could take Him from me. It was this thought that made me happy wherever I was."

Margaret Mary was favored, also, with a visit from her holy Founder, and instructed by him regarding the true character and spirit of his Institute, and was shown also some of the defects in the Community for which she was later to make reparation. He appeared to her shortly before his Feast (January 29), about three months after her Profession. "He showed me," she says, "during my prayer that the virtues which he had always most desired for his Daughters were those by which he had been himself most closely united to God, namely, charity towards God and our neighbor, and the most profound humility. They had fallen, he said, both from one and the other ; from charity towards God by regarding only creatures in their actions and seeking only their approbation, regardless meanwhile that they were in bad odor before God, and that by particular friendships they destroyed both charity and silence. As regards humility there was a want, he said, of keeping themselves within themselves, in

order to watch over their own defects ; and they judged ill of the intentions of their neighbors on the slightest grounds. 'This gives me great pain,' he said, 'seeing that they resist grace and the means which God gives them for a perfect amendment.' It was by a spirit of amiable severity and constant vigilance that all these defects were to be repaired. 'I will come,' he added, 'on the day of my Feast to choose my true Daughters, who possess my true spirit. I will write them in my heart, and offer them constantly to the Divine Majesty, in the odor of sweetness, to supply for the imperfect.'"

In order to enjoy the company of our Divine Lord in that Mystery of Love which He instituted in order to satisfy His desire of remaining constantly in the midst of us, Margaret Mary spent every moment that she could before the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord urged her so strongly, she said, to go in search of Him, that if she resisted she felt inexplicable suffering. It was evident that this attraction came from our Lord, for she suffered no less pain whenever she was inclined to remain before the altar at a time that obedience called her elsewhere.

Prayer, however, seemed to be the element, as it were, in which she lived. When obliged to quit it, she felt a pain as if her heart were being torn from her body. She would say then to our Lord, "My Jesus, I cannot remain longer

in Thy presence, do Thou come with me to sanctify all that I do, since all is for Thee."

But our Lord would teach her to practice true liberty of spirit in prayer, and to find a means of practicing prayer in the exercise of duties to which she was called by obedience. "Being employed on Easter Sunday," she says, "in a charge* which prevented my making my prayer with the Community, I was inclined to feel a little annoyance. But I was at once checked for this by my Sovereign Master, who said to me, 'Know, My Daughter, that the prayer of submission and sacrifice is more agreeable to Me than contemplation.'"

To confirm her in this spirit of obedience, she was commanded by our Lord to tell her Mother Superior that He wished her to be singular in nothing but her sufferings; and that He did not wish her to be a stone of offence, for that those who should strike against her would be grievously hurt; "Not for your own sake," she was told, "but on account of My Spirit which dwells within you."

At the same time, our Lord was so jealous of her fidelity in following the attraction by which He drew her to Himself in the Blessed Sacra-

* This was probably the charge of Assistant Infirmarian, to which she was appointed the first year after her Profession.

ment, that He showed His displeasure at any regulation which tended to keep her from it. She had been told that she should moderate the constant application of her mind to the thought of God, which might otherwise impair her health ; that she was not to be more devout than the rest, and that she should not be so constantly before the Blessed Sacrament, where she spent on feast days nearly the whole of the day in prayer. She resolved in consequence to remain on these days in her cell. But she found that it was impossible for her to do so. She resisted for some time the attraction she felt to the Blessed Sacrament ; but she was obliged at length to leave her cell and obey the voice of our Lord who called her. On her coming into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord said to her, in an angry tone, " Know that if you withdraw from My presence, I will make you feel it, as well as those who are the cause of it. I will hide My presence from them, and when **they** seek Me they shall not find Me."





CHAPTER X.

1673.

AS it was seen that our Lord continued to favor Margaret Mary with extraordinary gifts and graces, she was desired by the Mother de Saumaise, about six months after her Profession, to put in writing an account of all that passed within her.* She felt at first great repugnance to do so, but our Lord said to her, "Why do you refuse to obey My voice, and to put in writing what comes from Me, not from yourself? You have no part in it beyond a simple adherence to My will. Consider what you are, and what you deserve, and you will understand whence comes the good which you possess. Why do you fear, since I have given you a place of refuge where all becomes easy?" These words, as may be supposed, gave her great confidence, and inspired her with a great desire to obey. She accordingly wrote as follows. We see from the account how intimately connected are the graces which she received with the Sacred Heart of our Lord.

* This is a different account from that which Blessed Margaret Mary wrote at the order of her Confessor, Fr. Rolin, S.J.

"To begin," she says; "one day, on the eve of Communion, I asked of my Jesus to unite my heart to His, for this was all I aspired to; though indeed I said to myself, how could it be that nothing should be united to infinite Being. 'I know, O my God,' I said, 'that this divine union can be effected only in Thy love.'" Upon this she was allowed to see, by the highest point of her understanding, His Sacred Heart, brighter than the sun, and as of an immense size. An atom, as it were, dark and shapeless, seemed to be attempting to approach this beautiful light, but in vain. "This loving Heart," she says, "drew it then to Itself, saying, 'Lose thyself in My greatness, and see that thou never come forth from thence. For if thou leave it, thou shalt never again enter it.' Since that time," she says, "I have found my heart so bound to prayer, that it seems to me sometimes as though I had no longer the use of it. This is attended with such great peace, that I have no other care but to employ my time in the exercise of His holy love."

"I imagined sometimes," she adds, "that it might be the devil who kept me thus bound." Upon this she asked of our Lord to give her a knowledge of the deceits of the devil, that she might avoid them. He told her that it was impossible for the devil to have a knowledge of the interior unless he obtained it from some exterior

sign, and that he cannot possibly give true peace to the heart.

Even though the gift of prayer come from Almighty God, and carry with it an assurance of its divine origin during the time of prayer, this does not exempt the soul from considerable apprehension at other times lest it may be the subject of the illusions of the devil. It can find its security only in obedience to wise direction. Thus St. Teresa, though raised to a high degree of prayer, felt great alarm lest she might be deceived. "Our Lord gave me," she says, "very commonly the Prayer of Quiet, and often even that of Union, which lasted for a long time. But I began to fear for myself by reason of this extraordinary joy and sweetness which I felt, without having it in my power in general to prevent it; though, on the other hand, I felt within myself a strong assurance that it was from God, especially when I was actually in prayer." This alarm, indeed, increased as she advanced in prayer, and it was only after she had placed herself, as she tells us, under the direction of one of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus that she felt assured that her prayer came from the Spirit of God.

In order to try her fidelity, our Lord would sometimes, as He is wont with faithful souls, withdraw His sensible grace from Margaret Mary, so that she found herself in an utter

inability, as it were, to do anything. Upon her complaining on one occasion to our Lord that He allowed her to remain in His presence without doing anything, she heard in reply, "If I would have you in My presence deaf, blind, and dumb, ought you not to be satisfied?" Our Lord would seem to teach her by this that the soul should find her satisfaction in His divine will no less in desolation than in consolation. He wished to convey to her, perhaps, the same lesson when, during a time of recollection for the whole Community, He told her that when He makes His abode in a soul, He would have an understanding without curiosity, a mind devoid of the exercise of its judgment, a judgment uninfluenced by the will, and a heart with no other movement than that of His love.

The same spirit of self-abandonment and dependence upon His holy will was taught her by our Lord through the means of a singular favor she received from Him in the recovery of her voice, which she had lost for some time. "I have been unable," she says, "for a long time to sing the Office. This was no little trouble to me, both on account of the joy which I felt in singing the praises of my God, and also because I regarded this inability as a just punishment of my negligence. At length, on the eve of the Visitation, at Matins, having made several ineffectual efforts to sing the Invitatory, not

being able even to follow the choir in the Psalms, at the first verse of the *Te Deum* I felt myself wholly penetrated with a power before which all my own powers bowed themselves, as it were, in a spirit of homage and adoration. As I held my arms crossed in my sleeves, a heavenly light rested upon them in the form of a little child, or rather of a brilliant sun. 'My Lord and my God,' I said in silence, 'what an excess of love is this by which Thou thus lowerest Thine infinite greatness?' 'I am come, My Daughter,' He said, 'to ask you why you tell Me so often not to approach you?' 'Thou knowest, O my Lord,' I replied, 'that it is because I am not worthy to approach Thee, much less to touch Thee.' 'Learn then,' He said, 'that the more you retire into your own nothingness, the more does My greatness lower itself to find you.' But fearing that it might be an angel of Satan, I made Him the following request: 'If it be Thou, O my God, enable me then to sing Thy praises.' I immediately felt my voice free and stronger than ever. I joined in the *Te Deum* with the choir, and the rest of the Matins followed in the same manner, for I did not allow the caresses with which He favored me to make me less attentive to the Office. I felt my whole soul strongly united to His Divine presence, and employed in honoring Him. At the end He said to me, 'I wished to try the motive which

you had in singing My praises. Had you been for a moment less attentive I should have retired.' ”

“ Having had the use of my voice,” she says, “ for a considerable time, I lost it again. On begging of our Lord to give it me back, He replied, ‘ that it was not mine ; that He had lent it to me in order to oblige me to believe ; and that I ought to be equally well pleased either to lose it or possess it.’ I have remained since indifferent regarding it, nothing being so profitable to a soul as the most perfect self-abandonment in all respects.”

We can only comprehend the love of Jesus Christ in proportion to the knowledge we have of our own nothingness and misery. This knowledge our Blessed Lord chose to give Margaret Mary in the following Vision, in order that she might better understand the “ breadth and length and heighth and depth ” of His love. It was in the Wound of His Sacred Side that she was to find it.

On one occasion, she says, she seemed as though she were on the brink of a precipice. She could not understand how to explain this, and was greatly troubled at it, and she asked our Lord to explain what it was that thus disquieted her. No sooner was she engaged in prayer than our Lord presented Himself to her, and told her to look upon the opening in His Sacred Side

This, He told her, was an unfathomable abyss opened by a shaft of unmeasurable length, which was that of His love. If she wished to escape the abyss which terrified her she must plunge herself into this abyss of His Side, in which He had provided an escape from every other abyss. This, He told her, was the dwelling-place of those who love Him ; that they find in it two lives, one for the soul and the other for the heart. The soul finds there the source of living waters to purify, and to impart to it the life of grace, of which it had been deprived by sin. The heart finds there a furnace of love which allows it no longer to live any life but a life of love. The one sanctifies itself there, the other consumes itself. But since the opening is very narrow, it is necessary to be little and stripped of all things in order to find an entrance into it.

It was perhaps from the instruction which Margaret Mary received in this Vision that she derived that advice which she gave later to her Novices, to bury the abyss of every misery which they found in themselves in the abyss of love in the Sacred Heart of our Lord. "The Heart of Jesus," she told them, "is an abyss where you will find all. It is especially an abyss of love in which we should lose every other love, especially the self-love which is in us, with its evil fruits, such as human respect, and the desire of

raising ourselves above others and following our own inclinations. It is by burying these inclinations in the abyss of divine love that you will find all the riches which are necessary for you, according to the different states in which you may be.

"If you are in an abyss of privation and desolation, this Divine Heart is an abyss of every consolation, in which we should lose ourselves without desiring, however, to taste its sweetness.

"If you are in an abyss of dryness and powerlessness, go and bury yourself in the Heart of Jesus Christ, which is an abyss of power and love, without being over-anxious, however, to taste the sweetness of this love, except when it shall please Him.

"If you are in an abyss of poverty, and stripped of everything, bury yourself in the Heart of Jesus. It is filled with treasures, with which It will enrich you, if you allow It to do so.

"If you are in an abyss of weakness, relapses, and misery, go frequently to the Heart of Jesus. It is an abyss of mercy and strength, and will raise you up and strengthen you.

"If you experience in yourself an abyss of pride and vain self-esteem, bury it at once in the deep self-annihilation of the Heart of Jesus. This humble Heart is an abyss of humility.

"If you are in an abyss of ignorance and darkness, the Heart of Jesus is an abyss of light and

knowledge. Learn from It above all things to love It, and to do only what It desires of you.

"If you are in an abyss of infidelity and inconstancy, the Heart of Jesus is an abyss of constancy and fidelity. Bury yourself in It, and you will find there a love which constantly loves you and seeks your good.

"If you are, as it were, buried in death, go to the Heart of Jesus. You will find there an abyss of life, and draw from It a new life, in which you will no longer see but with the eyes of Jesus Christ, no longer act but by His movement, no longer speak but with His tongue, and no longer love but with His Heart.

"If you find yourself in an abyss of ingratitude, the Heart of Jesus is an abyss of gratitude. Draw from It whatever you wish to offer to God for all the blessings you have received from Him, and beg of Jesus to supply for you out of His abundance.

If you are in an abyss of agitation, impatience, or anger, go to the Heart of Jesus. It is an abyss of gentleness.

"If you are in an abyss of dissipation and distraction, you will find in the Sacred Heart of Jesus an abyss of recollection and fervor which will supply for all, and fix your heart and imagination by uniting them to Him.

"If you feel plunged in an abyss of sadness, bury this sadness itself in the Heart of Jesus. It

is an abyss of heavenly joy, and the treasure of delight to Saints and Angels.

“If you are in trouble and disquietude, the Divine Heart is an abyss of peace, and this peace It will impart to you.

“When you are in an abyss of bitterness and suffering, unite them to the abyss of the infinite sufferings of the Heart of Jesus, and you will learn of Him to suffer and to be happy in suffering.

“When you are in an abyss of fear, the Heart of Jesus is an abyss of confidence and love. Abandon yourself to It, and you will learn that fear should give place to love.

“In fine, in everything and on all occasions, plunge yourself in this ocean of love and charity, and, if possible, do not quit It until, like iron in the furnace, or as a sponge plunged in the sea and penetrated with its waters, you are penetrated with the fire with which this Heart is burning for God and men.”

Margaret Mary had been told, as we have seen, by her Mistress, on her first entrance into the Noviceship, to present herself before our Lord in prayer as a blank canvas before a painter. Our Lord had Himself explained to her that her soul was the canvas on which He designed to trace a copy of His life, which had been passed in love and sacrifice. He now renewed this instruction to her. “He told me,” she says, “that my heart was a living tablet,

upon which He designed to paint a living picture.' This was to cause her pain ; for the practice of mortification, which the imitation of our Lord supposes, cannot but be painful to nature, but this pain itself was to have in it more that was agreeable than painful. For what is painful in itself is sweetened by the thought of the love of our Blessed Lord. And hence Margaret Mary remarks : " It is true that since that time I have had no thirst for humiliations and mortifications, or anything else, which has not had more of sweetness in it than bitterness."

As the sense which the Saints have of their absolute dependence on Almighty God increases in proportion to their love of Him, so their sense of the graces they receive from Him gives them a proportionate sense of their inability to make an adequate return of gratitude for them. Hence nothing touched Margaret Mary more than the thought of the abuse of grace. " The abuse which I have made of it," she said, " is so great that I have nothing in myself which does not merit eternal punishment." This thought destroyed in her all inclination to pride or desire of esteem. She begged of God to efface her from the remembrance of creatures, or to let them know her ingratitude for His goodness, in order that they might heap upon her the contempt and confusion which she thought were so justly due to her.

The Agony of our Blessed Lord in the Garden has always been a favorite subject of contemplation to the Saints. Our Blessed Lord explained to Margaret Mary, in a Vision in 1673, the first year after her Profession, the sufferings He endured in this scene of His Passion for the sins of mankind, in order to prepare her the better for the sufferings she was to endure in the office of reparation which He designed for her.

"As I was considering attentively," she says, "the only object of my love in the Garden of Olives plunged in the sadness and agony of deep and loving grief, and feeling within me a strong desire to share in His sorrowful anguish, 'It is here,' He said to me, 'that I suffered interiorly more than in all the rest of My Passion, seeing Myself abandoned by Heaven and earth, and charged with the sins of all mankind. I appeared in the presence of the sanctity of God, Who, without having regard to My innocence, punished Me in His wrath, making Me drink the chalice filled with the gall and bitterness of His just indignation, and as though He had forgotten the name of Father to sacrifice Me to His just anger. No creature can comprehend the greatness of the torments which I suffered at that time. It is the same grief the criminal soul feels when it is before the tribunal of the divine sanctity which weighs upon it, punishes it, and overwhelms it in its just wrath.' He

added: 'My justice is irritated, and ready to punish hidden sinners by open chastisements, unless they do penance. I will make known to you when My justice is ready to inflict its blow upon those guilty heads. It will be when you feel My sanctity weigh heavily upon you. You must then raise your heart and your hands to Heaven by prayer and good works, presenting Me continually to My Father as a victim of love sacrificed and offered for the sins of the whole world; placing Me as a rampart and sure fortress between His justice and sinners in order to obtain My mercy, with which you will feel yourself surrounded when I wish to pardon any one of these sinners. It is then that you must offer Me to My Father, as the only object of His loving complacency, in thanksgiving for the mercy which He exercises towards sinners. You will know, moreover, when this soul will persevere so as to attain Heaven, for I will impart to you some slight sample of the joy which the Blessed experience on account of it, and all this by the communication of My love.'

It was not long before Margaret Mary experienced these effects of which our Blessed Lord had forewarned her. It was during the period of the first time of recollection which followed her Profession. "The divine sanctity," she says, "weighed so heavily upon me that I was unable to pray and to bear the interior grief

which I felt. I had such a feeling of despair, and so great a grief at appearing before my God, that if the same power which made me suffer had not supported me, I would willingly a thousand times have buried, destroyed, and annihilated myself, had it been in my power. And yet, in spite of all, I could not withdraw from the Divine Presence. It pursued me everywhere, as a criminal on the point of receiving her condemnation, though, at the same time, I felt so great a submission to the divine will of my God that I was ready to receive all the pains and sorrows which He was pleased to send me with the same readiness as the sweetness of His love."

Our Lord gave her notice also of the occasion which called forth the anger of His justice. "I thought," she says, "I heard a voice saying to me: 'The Lord is tired of waiting; He will enter into His granaries to sift His wheat, and separate the good grain from the bad.'" She tried to turn away her mind as from a distraction, but she felt compelled to hear a voice, which said to her: "My chosen people persecute Me in secret, and they have irritated My justice. But I will manifest their secret sins by visible chastisements, for I will sift them in the sieve of My sanctity, to separate them from My well-beloved. Having separated them I will surround them with the same sanctity which

places itself between the sinner and My mercy. And when My sanctity has once surrounded the sinner it is impossible for him to enter into himself. His conscience remains without remorse, his understanding without light, his heart without contrition, and he dies at length in his blindness." *

Our Lord afterwards disclosed to her His Heart, torn and pierced with wounds. "See the wounds," He said, "which I receive from My chosen people. Others content themselves with striking My Body; these attack My Heart, which has never ceased to love them. But My love will give place at length to My just anger, to chastise these proud souls so attached to the earth, who despise Me, and love only what is opposed to Me. They abandon Me for creatures, and fly humility to seek only esteem for themselves. And as their hearts are void of charity, they have nothing of Religious remaining but the name."

"During this time I never ceased," she says, "to ask of my God a true conversion for all those souls against whom His justice was irritated, offering

* This language is the same as that which is found in Holy Scripture, and must be understood in the same sense. If the sinner would make use of the graces which Almighty God offers him he would enter into himself, and his conversion would be secured.

Him the merits of the Life, Death, and Passion of His Divine Son, my Saviour, in satisfaction for the injuries which He has received from us ; offering myself to His divine goodness to suffer all the pains which He should be pleased to send me, so as even to be annihilated rather than see those souls perish which had cost Him so dear."

The impression produced on Margaret Mary by the sanctity of God caused her, on another occasion, to find her torment in that which formed her greatest delight, Holy Communion. "Having suffered a long time," she says, "under the weight of the sanctity of God, I lost my voice and my strength. I felt so great a confusion at appearing before creatures that death would have been preferable to me. Holy Communion was so grievous to me that it would be difficult for me to explain how painful it was for me to approach it, though I was not allowed to do otherwise, for He Himself placed me in this state, and forbade me to keep away. I could say with the Prophet that my tears served me for food night and day. Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, Who was my only refuge, treated me with such indignation that I endured a kind of agony, and I could remain before It only by doing extreme violence to myself. If at times I would go and present myself before Him, saying, 'Whither, O Divine Justice, wouldst

Thou have me go, since Thou accompaniest me everywhere?’ I went in and came out not knowing what to do, and without finding any rest but that of grief.”

In order perhaps to encourage her amidst the sufferings which the sight of His sanctity inflicted upon her, our Lord would show to Margaret Mary the conduct which caused His sufferings on the part of those for whom He wished her to make reparation. “One day our Lord presented Himself to me,” she says, “covered with wounds, His Body all bleeding, and His Heart torn with grief. He was as though quite wearied. I prostrated myself at His feet, filled with awe, and without daring to say anything to Him. ‘See,’ He said, ‘the state to which My chosen people have reduced Me—those whom I had designed to appease My justice. They persecute Me in secret. If they do not amend, I will chastise them severely. I will withdraw the just, and sacrifice the rest to My just wrath, which shall be enkindled against them.’” It was to the love of His Sacred Heart itself that she had recourse in order to appease His offended justice. “I presented to Him,” she says, “His own suffering love, one single look of which was capable of appeasing His wrath.”

It was of the injury which He received in Holy Communion that our Blessed Lord specially complained, and it was in order to make

reparation for this that Margaret Mary suffered that apprehension which she experienced in receiving Holy Communion. "One day," she says, "feeling myself seized with a lively apprehension of approaching Holy Communion, from fear of dishonoring my Saviour, but not having been able to obtain permission of my Mother Superior to stay away, I approached with so extraordinary a sorrow that my whole body shuddered with apprehension of that grief which my Saviour would feel on account of some souls who were to receive Him." "After Holy Communion," she says, "He presented Himself to me as the *Ecce Homo*, all torn and disfigured. 'I have not found any one,' He said, 'who would give Me a place of repose in this My suffering and sorrowful condition.' This sight impressed me with so lively a sorrow that I would rather have died a thousand times than see my Saviour in such a condition. 'If you knew,' He said to me, 'who they are who have reduced Me to this condition, your grief would be much greater. Five souls consecrated to My service have treated Me thus. I have been dragged by strong cords through a narrow space beset with sharp points, nails, and thorns, and they have brought Me to this state.'

"On my feeling a great desire to know the meaning of these words, our Lord explained to me that the cords were the promises by which

He had bound Himself to give Himself to us ; their strength was His love ; the narrow space were hearts that were ill-disposed ; and the sharp points the spirit of pride. I offered to Him the heart He had given me as a place of repose. He presented Himself to me, and told me to kiss His wounds, in order that I might relieve the pain."

Our Lord manifested to Margaret Mary in the following Vision the spirit of pride for which He would have her make reparation by acts of humility. "One day after Holy Communion," she says, 'He showed me a rugged crown made of nineteen sharp thorns, which pierced His Divine Head. I felt so lively a sorrow, that I could speak to Him only by my tears. He told me that He had come to seek me, that I might pluck out the thorns which had been thus deeply buried in His Head by a faithless Spouse. 'She pierces My brain with thorns,' He said, 'as often as in her pride she prefers herself to Me.' Not knowing what to do to draw them out, I was desired by the Mother Superior to ask our Lord. He told me that I should make as many acts of humility, in order to honor His humiliations. But, as I was so proud myself, I begged of the Mother Superior to offer to our Lord the practices of humility of the Community. This was very pleasing to Him ; and, five days after, He showed me three of the wounds, the pair

of which was much relieved. The others remained still a long time."

Our Lord repaid the sufferings which Margaret Mary endured from the sanctity of His justice by the following singular favor of His love, by which He allowed her after Communion to repose near His Sacred Heart. "On a Friday," she says, "after I had received my Saviour, He placed my mouth to the Wound of His Sacred Side, and held me close to Him, for three or four hours, with delights which I cannot express. I heard meanwhile the words frequently repeated: 'You see now that nothing is lost by trusting to My power, and that everything is to be found in My enjoyment.' 'O my Love,' I said to Him, 'I will gladly quit all these excessive delights, to love Thee for the love of Thyself;' and I repeated these words as often as He renewed His caresses."

Our Lord taught her at this time a practice by which she might honor the Agony which He endured in the Garden, and took occasion at the same time to impress upon her the supreme importance of obedience founded on supernatural love, and of the cordial union of Religious with their Superiors.

"He told me at this time," she says, "that I should rise at the hour which He would appoint, and recite five *Paters* and five *Aves* prostrate on the ground, together with five acts of adoration

which He had taught me, to render Him homage for the extreme anguish which He suffered on the night of His Passion. 'Thou knowest, my Lord,' I replied, 'that I am not my own, and that I will do only what my Mother Superior shall order me.' 'I understand it no otherwise,' He said to me, 'for, Almighty as I am, I ask nothing of you but in dependence on your Mother Superior. Give good heed to these words from the mouth of Truth. All Religious who are disconnected and separated from their Superiors, should regard themselves as vessels of reprobation in which every good liquor is changed into corruption, and on which the divine Sun of justice, as He pours His rays, produces the same effect as the rays of the sun upon mud. The more such souls endeavor to approach My Heart by means of the sacraments, prayers, and other exercises, the further do I retire from them, so great is the horror I have of them. They will fall from one hell into another, for it is this disunion which has destroyed so many, and will destroy more. For every Superior holds My place, be he good or bad. Every inferior, therefore, who thinks to act against him, inflicts so many mortal wounds on his own soul. And in vain at last will he groan at the gate of mercy, for he will not be heard.'"

Our Lord comforted Margaret Mary also under the sufferings she endured from the

impression of the sanctity of His justice by assuring her of the power which they exercised in favor of sinners. "I allow you," He said, "to feel a little sample ; for just souls suffer in this manner from My sanctity in order that the rigor of its justice may not fall upon sinners."

As she was preparing to make her annual confession, and felt a great anxiety to discover her sins, "Why do you torment yourself?" our Lord said to her ; "do what is in your power, and I will supply for what is wanting. I require nothing so much in the sacraments as a contrite and humble heart, which, with a sincere will no more to offend Me, accuses itself without disguise. I then pardon without delay, and thereupon follows a perfect amendment." She then made her annual confession, after which it seemed to her as though her dress were taken off her, and she was clothed in a white robe.

After Holy Communion, our Lord said to her, "I have come, My well-beloved, your Spouse, your God, and your Love, to clothe your soul in a robe of innocence, in order that you may live the life of a Man-God. To this end I will simplify and purify all your powers, that they may no longer receive any other impression. It is in the presence of the Holy Trinity and of My Holy Mother that I do you this favor.* If

* In writing to Father Rolin, about the year 1686, an account of the graces which she had received from

you ever lose it, you will never more receive it, and you will hurl yourself into so deep an abyss, by reason of the height where I have lodged you, which is the Wound of My Heart, that you will never again be able to rise from the fall."

Margaret Mary describes the effect which this grace produced upon her soul. It destroyed in it every desire but that of loving God, and every fear but that of offending Him. "My Beloved," she says, "has consumed in me every desire but that of receiving His divine love, and has left me without fear of anything but of sin. Of this He gives me so great a fear that I would rather see myself given up to the fury of all the devils than see my soul stained with the slightest sin. The regret which I feel for so many horrible crimes which I have committed against God makes me offer myself unceasingly to His divine goodness to suffer all the punishment I have deserved for them, as also for the sins into which I should have fallen had it

our Lord, Blessed Margaret Mary speaks of this favor :—
"After a general confession of all my criminal life, immediately after the absolution, our Lord caused me to be clothed with a robe whiter than snow, which He called the robe of innocence. After which He opened His Heart, and said to me, 'Behold the place of your abode forever, wherein you will be able to preserve without spot the robe of innocence with which I have clothed your soul.'"

not been for the assistance of His grace. I abandon myself to all the chastisements which it shall please God to inflict upon me, with the exception of relapse into sin. In truth, I would rather plunge into the most dreadful abyss than accept of this. I also ask of my God to efface me from the memory of every creature, that they may remember this miserable nothing only to avenge on me the outrages which I have inflicted on my God by so many sins which I have committed, since I cannot avenge them myself, as I am wholly sacrificed to obedience. Would that all creatures were animated with a holy zeal to treat me as a criminal guilty of high treason. But in fine, it is to my God that I abandon myself, since He alone knows the grief of my heart for my ingratitude. He alone is the sovereign remedy for all my evils. They can be understood by Him alone. All things find their rest only in their centre ; my heart is wholly buried in its centre, which is the most humble Heart of Jesus. It finds therein a burning thirst for humiliations, contempt, and oblivion on the part of all creatures. For I can never feel so happy as when I am conformed to my Crucified Spouse. It is this which makes me love my own abjection more than my life, holding the precious treasure clasped to my heart as a pledge of the love of my Well-Beloved, which should never quit me for a moment."

Margaret Mary describes also by obedience her ordinary employment during the time of prayer. "Every morning," she says, "when I awake I seem to find my God present, and my heart unites itself to Him as to its first beginning and its only satisfaction. This gives me so burning a thirst to go to prayer, that whilst I am dressing minutes seem to be hours. I go to it most frequently without any other preparation than that which my God makes within me. I present myself to Him commonly as a sick person before an all-powerful Physician, and apart from Whom I can find no refuge or comfort. I place myself at His feet as a living victim, who has no other desire but to be wholly offered and sacrificed to Him, in order to consume myself as a holocaust in the pure flames of His love. I then feel my heart lost as in a burning furnace, without my having any more the use of it. It seems to me sometimes that my spirit quits me to go and unite and lose itself in the infinite greatness of its God, without its being in my power to apply it to the subject which I have prepared. It is satisfied to stop on this one object, in which it finds a plenitude so great that all else is a matter of indifference to it. My understanding has no light or knowledge but that which the divine Sun of justice communicates to it. I have no other impression or movement but that of loving Him, and I feel

myself sometimes so strongly urged to it that I would willingly give a thousand lives, if it were possible, to testify to Him the desire and ardor which consume me. I use all my power to embrace my Beloved with the powers of my soul. The time of prayer seems to me so short that I frequently complain to my God, saying, 'When shall it be, Beloved of my Soul, that the moments which are so brief, and so unfeeling in their fleeting course, shall no longer have the power to limit my happiness?' I am so strongly drawn to Him that I often feel deprived of the power of drawing a sigh, as though my breast were scored with razors. It is with difficulty that I can breathe, and I remain sometimes thus during the whole time of prayer, my body suffering with my Jesus and my spirit rejoicing in loving Him. But in this the inferior part does not find its account, for it neither sees nor knows what passes in the higher part of my soul, which forgets itself, and has no other desire but that of uniting itself with God."

In this account given by Margaret Mary we seem to see a description of what St. Teresa speaks of as the fourth, or highest, degree of prayer. In explaining it, she says: "Here there is no longer question of perceiving anything distinctly, but simply of enjoying, without knowing what it is that one enjoys. We perceive, indeed, clearly that we are enjoying a good in which

are comprised all goods together, but we do not understand what this good is. All the faculties and all the senses are so occupied with this joy that none are any longer free to be able to give attention to anything whatever, either interior or exterior. . . . During this time, all application to any other object would be an embarrassment and torture to the soul, and would only serve to distract it from its sweet repose.

“ Commonly, this elevation of the spirit like a flame, and this transport of the soul, rising as it were above itself, takes place during the time of its union and the ardor of its heavenly love ; for, as I understand it, the simple union of the powers of the soul with God is different from the elevation of the soul which takes place in this union. . . . All the powers are, as it were, buried and suspended in their action, so that we cannot know, as I have said, in any manner that they act. If one was occupied with any mystery, the memory of it is lost, as if one had never thought of it ; if employed in reading, we no longer remember what we were reading, and can no longer fix our attention upon it. The will is occupied with loving, but without knowing how it loves ; and as for the understanding, if it knows anything of what is passing, it does not understand itself how it knows it.” “ It should be remarked and well understood,” she adds, “ that this so singular a

grace of our Lord always leaves in the soul great spiritual riches."

"My good Master," continues Margaret Mary, "allows me to feel sensibly His divine presence, and discovers its beauties to my soul. His love so binds at the same time all my powers, that I am unable to say anything to Him to testify to Him the ardor of my love, which is a torment to me, though its sweetness is so great. I use every effort to escape from this state, but in vain. 'Thou mockest at the endeavors of my heart,' I say to our Lord, 'to testify to Thee its love.' 'You have no longer the use of it,' He replied, 'but all its movements are known to Me.'" "With this," she says, "I remained content."

"Such," says Margaret Mary, "is my ordinary employment in prayer; though it is not I that make it, but my God makes it Himself in me, wretched creature as I am. Most commonly, I finish it without knowing what I have done in it, and without making any resolution, petition, or offering, except that of my Jesus to His Eternal Father."

It is this recourse to the Sacred Humanity of our Lord that St. Teresa recommends in such strong terms, however high the degree of prayer to which any one may be raised. "I see clearly," she says, "and have recognized for a long time, that in order to please God we must

address ourselves to this most Sacred Humanity, in which He has said He takes His delight, and through the mediation of which He wishes to confer upon us His greatest graces." "On this account, Reverend Father," she says to her Director, "do not seek any other way, even though you be arrived at the greatest height of contemplation."

"'My God,' I say," continues Margaret Mary, "'I offer Thee Thy well-beloved Son for my thanksgiving for all the blessings Thou conferrest upon me, for my petition, my offering, my adoration, and all my resolutions. In fine, I offer Him to Thee for my love and my all. Receive Him, Eternal Father, for all that Thou desirest of me. I have nothing to offer Thee which is not unworthy of Thee except Him, the possession of Whom Thou givest me with so much love.'"

Whilst Margaret Mary enjoyed the favor of being so closely united to God in prayer, it was not likely that she should escape temptations which would seek, under the appearance of good, to deprive her of so rich a treasure. "Nature and self-love," she says, "meanwhile assail me violently. They tell me that I am losing my time, and that I am in the way of perdition. This throws me sometimes into such great trouble that I know not to whom to have recourse except to my God. I find Him ever

ready to assist me to escape from this disquietude. He allows my soul to enjoy His divine presence, and infuses into it a peace which restores me at once to my former tranquillity. 'A child can never perish,' He says to me, 'in the arms of an Almighty Father.' I abandon myself then entirely to His divine will, in order that He may act in me according to His good pleasure, without having regard to my own satisfaction. His loving will is so dear to me that I would rather see my body exposed to all the furies of hell than do anything contrary to His good pleasure. I wish to submit myself blindly to Him even in what appears to me most difficult, such as to see a God so great and powerful confer so many favors on so miserable a creature, who continually abuses them.

"I feel my heart burning with a secret and interior fire which absorbs every suffering. I feel but one wound a little below my heart, which is inconceivably delightful to me. The fire which consumes me makes me feel as though I had no longer any power over my heart, and spreading sometimes from my breast to my face it inebriates me, as it were, with such sweetness that I do not know where I am or what I am doing, especially when I communicate frequently."



CHAPTER XI.

1674 — 1675.

As Margaret Mary proceeds to recount the favors bestowed upon her by our Lord, she gives expression from time to time to the mortal repugnance which she feels to continue the recital. "But," she adds, "I continue by obedience to write the account of the graces conferred upon me during my third and fourth year in Religion."

As our Lord had chosen Margaret Mary to communicate to others that fire of divine love which burned in His heart, and which He wished to cast upon the earth, He chose her as a sanctuary in which the fire of His love might burn continually. "Do you know," our Lord said to her, "to what end I give you My graces so abundantly? It is to make you as a sanctuary where the fire of My love may burn continually. Your heart is as a consecrated altar, which nothing defiled should approach. I have chosen it in order to offer to My Eternal Father a burning sacrifice to appease His justice, and to give Him infinite glory by the offering you shall make to Him of Myself, uniting with it that of your

whole being in order to honor the Sacrifice which I made of Myself."

"I acknowledge," she says, "that after that time I felt in my heart so strong and burning a fire that I should have wished to communicate it to all creatures in order that my God might be loved. For this purpose I prostrated myself upon the earth, and whilst I offered our Lord to His Eternal Father, I sunk into my own nothing that I might render homage to His greatness."

The love of our Blessed Lord is to be found in its true source and centre, which is His Sacred Heart. This lesson our Lord taught Margaret Mary in the following Vision, by which He instructed her where she was to learn the love she desired, and what are its characteristics. "My Beloved presented Himself to me," as she describes it, "and said, 'I wish you to read in the book of life, in which is contained the science of love.' And discovering to me His Sacred Heart, He showed me written there the following words: 'My love reigns in suffering, triumphs in humility, and rejoices in unity.'" This lesson, she says, made such an impression upon her that she never lost the remembrance of it.

A heart which allows the will to sin still to linger within it offers thereby a greater outrage to the love of our Lord than even by an act of sin itself. This our Lord explained to Margaret Mary on the following occasion, in reference to

the conduct of one who had received Him in Holy Communion. "See, My Daughter," He said, "the ill-treatment I receive in this soul which has just received Me. She has renewed all the sufferings of My Passion." Margaret Mary, seized with fear and grief, cast herself at His feet, and offered herself with tears to make atonement to Him for the injuries He had received. "My Lord and my God," she said, "if my life is of any use to atone for these injuries, though those which Thou receivest from me are a thousand times greater, I am Thy slave, do with me whatever Thou pleasest." "I desire," He said, "when I let you know the ill-treatment which I receive from this soul, that after receiving Me you prostrate yourself at My feet to make amends to My Heart. Offer to My Father for this end the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross, and in union with it your whole being, in order to render homage to the Sacrifice which I offered, and repair the indignities which I receive from this heart."

"I was quite surprised," she says, "to hear such words regarding a soul which had just washed herself in the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. But the same voice said to me again: 'It is not that she is in sin; but the will to sin still lingers in her heart. And this I regard with greater horror than the act of sin itself, for it is to apply My Blood with contempt to a corrupt heart,

inasmuch as an evil will is the root of all corruption.' At these words I suffered great pain, begging mercy unceasingly of our Lord." Nor were her prayers in vain. "He told me," she says, "one day after Easter, after I had received Him—'I have heard your groaning, and have inclined My mercy towards this soul.'" "This," she adds, "consoled me greatly."

In order to refresh her soul, which often suffered great agony from the sanctity of His justice, our Lord invited her to His Sacred Heart, as a delightful garden, and bade her gather at will the flowers that grew there. But, true to the spirit of love which animated her, she would gather only myrrh, the emblem of mortification and suffering, which she desired in order to be conformed to Him. "One day," she says, "I felt my soul in a very painful agony, when our Lord, honoring me with His visit, said to me, 'Enter, My Daughter, into this delightful garden, in order to revive your languishing soul.' It was, I saw, His Sacred Heart, and the flowers were most pleasing by their variety and wondrous beauty. After I had looked at them all without daring to touch them, 'You may gather them,' He said, 'at your pleasure.' Casting myself at His sacred feet, 'My Divine Saviour,' I said to Him, 'I wish for none but Thee, Who art a bundle of myrrh to me, which I would fain carry continually in the arms of

my affection.' 'You have chosen well,' He replied ; 'it is myrrh alone which can retain its beauty and fragrance. This life is its season ; it is not known in eternity. It bears there another name.' "

Our Lord, as we have seen, constantly bore Margaret Mary company, and accompanied her wherever she went. Inviting her to bear the weight of His sanctity of justice, He presented Himself to her, bearing a heavy burden, which He wished to place upon her shoulders, that His justice might not fall on a faithless soul whom He showed to her. She offered herself to bear the burden, and so great was the suffering she endured that she fell into a severe illness. "I saw Him," she says, "with a heavy burden, which He wished to place upon my shoulders." "Will you bear the weight of My sanctity of justice?" He said ; "I am ready to let it fall heavily upon that Religious," and He showed her to her. Margaret Mary cast herself at His feet. "Rather consume me," she said, "even to the marrow of my bones, than destroy that soul which has cost Thee so dear. Spare not my life ; I sacrifice it to Thee."

"As I rose from the earth I found myself," she says, "charged with a weight which so overwhelmed me that I could not drag myself along. I then felt myself consumed with so burning a fire that it penetrated even to the marrow of my

bones. This obliged me in a short time to betake myself to my bed, under the effects of a severe illness. God alone knows what I had to suffer."

The desire, however, which she had to receive our Lord in Holy Communion was so strong that it overcame even her illness. Our Lord, who gave her the desire, gave her also the strength to carry it into execution. "During my illness," she says, "I felt a strong desire to go to the Choir to receive Holy Communion, though I was so weak at the time that I could not support myself. I saw clearly," she says, "that my endeavor would be in vain unless He Who attracted me gave me strength to carry out my desire. He was not long in coming to my aid. It seemed to me that He touched me with His hand and said to me: 'What do you fear, Daughter of little faith? Arise and come and find Me.'" "I felt," she says, "that the command had such an effect that it seemed to me I had no longer anything the matter with me. I arose, without acquainting the Infirmarian; but she required me to go to bed at once, in spite of every assurance that I could give her of my being well. Our Mother, on her coming, reproved me for the attachment I showed to my own will. I did not tell her the reason, fearing it might be an imagination, and that she might believe it to be reality." *

* This is not the case of a sudden cure, which brought

The love which Margaret Mary entertained for our Blessed Lord in Holy Communion, and her sense of the injuries to which He exposed Himself in that Mystery, led her to feel inexpressible pain at the thought of this Bread of Life being eaten unworthily.

She felt then especial pain on His showing her the ill-treatment He received in a soul in which she saw Him, as it were, bound, trampled upon, and despised. On another occasion she saw Him in a heart which resisted His love. He held His hands to His sacred ears, and His eyes were closed, whilst He said: "I will not hear what she says to Me or look upon her misery, so that My heart may be untouched, and as insensible towards her as she is towards Me."

He taught her Himself a practice by means of which she might move Him to have compassion on hardened hearts. He desired her to come every Friday to adore Him thirty-three times upon the Cross, the throne of His mercy. She was to endeavor to keep herself in the same dispositions in which the Blessed Virgin stood at the foot of the Cross, and to beg of the Eternal Father, by the sufferings of His Divine Son, the conversion of hardened hearts.

also a correction upon Margaret Mary, during the time that Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié was Mother Superior, as will appear later. The present instance occurred in 1674, in the time of Mother de Saumaise.

As the Sacred Heart of the Incarnate Word forms the object of the complacency of the Eternal Father, so it is in the most pure Heart of the Blessed Virgin that we are to find the dispositions required for approaching both the Eternal Father and her Divine Son. Hence, when our Lord would teach Margaret Mary the dispositions in which she was to discharge the three great acts, of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, receiving Him in Holy Communion, and offering her Prayer, He taught her to look for them in the Heart of His Blessed Mother.

She was to assist at Mass, He told her, in the dispositions above mentioned, in which the Blessed Virgin stood at the foot of the Cross.

She was to present Him, when she received Him in Holy Communion, the dispositions of His Blessed Mother, as she pronounced the words—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

In Prayer she was to offer up the dispositions which were in the Heart of the Blessed Virgin as she was presented in the Temple.

Great as was the love of Margaret Mary for the Blessed Sacrament, she quitted It at once when called elsewhere by obedience. "It is of little matter," she said to our Blessed Lord, "in what Thou employest me; the whole time is Thine and not mine. It is for Thee to require me to employ it according to Thy desire. But

I leave my heart," she said, "in presence of the Adorable Sacrament, whilst I go to sacrifice my will to Thine. It shall remain before Thee as a burning lamp, which wastes itself away in honoring Thee."

After these and similar expressions, as she was making her genuflection before retiring, our Lord said to her: "Are you going, then, without your heart, since yours is never more to quit this place? I will fill it with a precious balm, which will keep alive in it the fire of My love. Good-will shall be the wick, and it shall never burn away. All that you do and suffer with My grace you must place in My Heart. It shall then be changed into a precious balm, to serve as the oil of this lamp, and all shall be consumed by the fire of My divine love."

"I take such pleasure," added our Lord, "in seeing your heart that I wish to put Myself in its place, and to serve as your heart." "This He did," she says, "in so sensible a manner that I could not doubt it. Since that time," she adds, "His goodness gives me so free an access to His greatness that I cannot express it. Sometimes He allowed me to see my heart, which is truly His and no longer mine, as a lamp before the Blessed Sacrament. He then said to me: 'Have you lost by the change which you have made with Me in giving Me all? Be careful only to fill your lamp and I will

kindle the fire.’” Her soul experienced such transports of joy that it seemed, she says, as if it were on the point of quitting her body. “Be very careful,” our Lord said to her another time, “never to allow this lamp to go out. For if it is once out you will no longer have any fire to rekindle it.”

“It is thus,” says Margaret Mary, in conclusion, “that our Lord lavished upon His wretched slave favors without number, which I pass over in silence. I will only say that from that time I had no other preparation for Holy Communion than Himself; He served me in place of heart, soul, mind, will, life, love, and all. As I feared that there might be some gross negligence in myself, I frequently endeavored to read over a point of meditation; but after I had read it over several times I found that I knew as little about it as before. All vanished from my mind whilst I frequently heard the following reproach: ‘Why do you seek for means to find the end which you already possess?’ I enjoyed no longer any pleasure but in the closet of my heart, where I always found my Spouse; nor did exterior occupations interrupt this sweet converse.”

Margaret Mary made known these singular graces which she received to her Mother Superior and her Mistress of Novices, from whom she kept nothing concealed. She was told they

were extraordinary ways, which did not suit the spirit of the Daughters of the Visitation. This caused her, as may be supposed, much grief, and she used, in consequence, every effort to withdraw herself from this state. But all her endeavors were in vain. "For the Spirit which possessed me," she says, "had already established such a dominion over mine that I could no longer make use of it, or of my interior powers, which I found were wholly absorbed in Him." She did all in her power to follow the method of prayer taught her, but to no effect; she could only retain what her Divine Master of prayer taught her Himself. Her Superiors, in order to test the truth of these divine operations, did all in their power to efface them, and she was desired to do the same. "This caused me," she says, "to suffer a great deal. I combated against Him as I was told, and followed exactly all that obedience required of me, in order to withdraw myself from His power. But He rendered all my efforts useless. I complained to Him, saying: "Alas! my Sovereign Lord, why dost Thou not leave me in the common way of the Daughters of Holy Mary? Hast Thou, then, brought me into Thy holy house to destroy me? Give these Thy extraordinary graces to those chosen souls who will correspond with them better than I do, for I only resist Thee. All I wish for is Thy love and Thy Cross; that suffices for my being a

good Religious, and that is all I desire. 'Let us then combat, My Daughter,' was the reply I received ; 'I am content. We will see which of the two will gain the victory, the Creator or His creature, but whoever conquers shall remain conqueror forever.' " "These words threw me," she says, "into an extreme confusion."

Our Lord assured her that He was not offended at the opposition she made Him by obedience ; and that He not only wished her to do what her Superiors told her, but moreover to do nothing that He ordered her without their consent. "But I will teach you," He said, "that I am Master of My gifts and of My own creatures, and that nothing shall prevent Me from accomplishing My designs." This injunction gave great pleasure to her Mother Superior. "She allowed me," says Margaret Mary, "to abandon myself to the power of the Spirit who conducted me, and this I did with great joy."

Margaret Mary now enjoyed great peace, freed as she was from the state of violent constraint in which she had been kept ; and acting under the influence of the Spirit who guided her, she renewed one day after Holy Communion the sacrifice she had already made of her liberty and her whole being to God. The only request she made was that our Lord would allow nothing extraordinary to appear outwardly in her, unless it were what would serve to humble her more

before creatures, and destroy their esteem of her. She was afraid that she might betray our Lord, and that His gifts would not be safe in her keeping. But our Lord reassured her, and promised to be Himself the guardian of His gifts in her heart. "Fear nothing, My Daughter," He said to her, "I will order everything aright ; I will be Myself the guardian of your heart, and I will make you faithful in accomplishing My will."





CHAPTER XII.

1674.

OUR Lord had hitherto bestowed many singular graces upon Margaret Mary, in order to prepare her soul for the work for which He destined her. He had with this view favored her also from time to time with some glimpses, as it were, of His Sacred Heart. But these appeared to have reference more immediately to herself. He had opened to her the Wound of His Sacred Side, in which she was to find a place of abode, and a secret charm which was to sweeten every difficulty. The Sacred Heart had been mysteriously represented to her at one time as an ocean, as it were, of light, in which her own heart, as a dark atom, was absorbed and lost ; at another as an abyss of love into which she was to plunge herself to escape the abyss of her own misery. It had been laid open to her as a book of life in which she was to learn the science of divine love ; as a delightful garden, the beauty and fragrance of which was to revive her soul.

But our Lord began now to manifest to her in a more special manner the precious treasure

of His Sacred Heart, which she was to make known and communicate to others.

“Being one day before the Blessed Sacrament,” is the account which she gives herself of the extraordinary favor she received, “and having at the time more leisure than usual, I felt myself wholly invested with the presence of God, so that I lost all thought of myself and the place where I was, and abandoned myself to the Divine Spirit, yielding up my heart to the power of His love. My Sovereign Master made me repose for a long time upon His Divine Breast, where He discovered to me the marvels of His love and the inexplicable secrets of His Sacred Heart, which He had up to this time kept concealed from me. He opened to me for the first time His Divine Heart in a manner so real and sensible, that He left me no room to doubt of the reality of this grace, in spite of the dread which I have always had of deceiving myself in anything that I say on such matters.

“The following, as it seems to me, is the way in which the thing occurred. Jesus said to me, ‘My Divine Heart is so full of love for men, and for you in particular, that being unable to contain within Itself the flames of Its burning charity, It must needs spread them abroad by your means, and manifest Itself to them to enrich them with the treasures It contains. I discover to you the price of these treasures ; they contain

graces of sanctification and salvation necessary to draw them from the abyss of perdition. I have chosen you, in spite of your unworthiness and ignorance, for the accomplishment of this great design, in order that it may better appear that all is done by Me.' ”

After these words, our Lord asked her for her heart. She begged of Him to take it. This He did, and placed it in His own Adorable Heart, where He showed it to her as a little atom which was being consumed in this burning furnace. Withdrawing it then as a burning flame in form of a heart, He restored it to the place from whence He had taken it, saying to her, “See, My well-beloved, I give you a precious pledge of My love. I have enclosed within your side a little spark of the vivid flames of that love to serve you for a heart, and to consume you to the last moment of your life. Its ardor will never be extinguished, and you will be unable to find any relief from it, except some slight relief by bleeding. And even this remedy will bring you more humiliation and suffering than relief. I wish you therefore to ask for it with simplicity, both in order to put in practice what is prescribed by the Rule, and also to give you the consolation of shedding your blood on the cross of humiliations. In fine, to leave you a mark that the favor I have done you is not an imagination, and that it is to be the foundation of all

those which I design to confer upon you, although I have closed the wound in your side, the pain, nevertheless, will constantly continue. You have taken, hitherto, only the name of My slave, I give you from this time that of the beloved Disciple of My Sacred Heart."

After this signal favor, which lasted for a long time, and during which, as she expresses it, she did not know whether she was in Heaven or upon earth, Margaret Mary remained for several days all on fire, as it were, with divine love, and so out of herself that she could hardly speak a word. She was obliged to do violence to herself to join in recreation or take food. She could not sleep for the wound in her side, the pain of which was so precious to her, and enkindled such an ardor within her, that it in a manner consumed her and burned her alive.

She felt, as she expresses it, such a plenitude of God that she could not express herself to her Mother Superior as she would have wished to do, in spite of the pain and confusion which she felt in speaking of such favors. "This confusion which I feel in consequence of my unworthiness is so great," she says, "that I would prefer a thousand times to tell my sins to the whole world. It would indeed have been a great consolation to me had I been allowed to tell them, and to read my general confession aloud in the Refectory, in order to show the great corruption

within me, and that no one might attribute to myself the graces which I received."

This signal favor was renewed on the first Friday of each month in the following manner. The Sacred Heart was represented to her as a sun, shining with great splendor, the burning rays of which fell vertically upon her heart, which was enflamed with a fire so vivid that it seemed as if it would reduce her to ashes. It was at these times especially that our Divine Lord gave her His lessons, and disclosed to her the secrets of His Heart.

She mentions one occasion in particular. On this our Divine Lord instructed her to go to Holy Communion as often as she was allowed, to communicate on the first Friday of each month, and to watch for an hour during the night between Thursday and Friday, from eleven till midnight. This has since been known by the name of the "Holy Hour."

"On one occasion," she says, "whilst the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, I felt drawn within myself by an extraordinary recollection of all my senses and powers. Jesus Christ, my sweet Master, presented Himself to me all resplendent with glory, His Five Wounds shining like five suns. From His Sacred Humanity issued flames on all sides, but especially from His adorable Breast, which resembled a furnace, and which was open and disclosed to me His

most amiable Heart, the living source of these flames. He revealed to me at the same time the ineffable marvels of His pure love, and the excess of His love towards men. He complained of their ingratitude, and said that He felt this more sensibly than any other pain in His Passion. 'If they made Me a return,' He said, 'all that I have done for them would appear but little to My love. But they entertain only coldness towards Me, and the only return they make to My advances is by rejecting Me. Do you at least give Me the consolation of supplying for their ingratitude as far as you are able.' On my representing to Him my inability, 'See,' He replied to me, 'this will enable you to supply for all your deficiencies.' And at the same moment His Heart opened, and there issued from it so burning a flame that I thought I should have been consumed by it. I could not bear it, and I asked Him to have pity on my weakness. 'I will be your strength,' He said to me; 'fear nothing, but be attentive to what I tell you, and to the following requests I make of you, in order to dispose you for the accomplishment of My designs :—

“ ‘ You shall receive Me, in the first place, in Holy Communion as often as obedience shall permit you, whatever mortification or humiliation it may cause you, for they are pledges of My love.

“ ‘ Secondly, you shall, moreover, communicate on the first Friday of each month.

“ ‘ Thirdly, every night between Thursday and Friday, I will make you share in that mortal sadness I was pleased to feel in the Garden of Olives ; and this participation which I will give you in My sadness shall reduce you to an agony harder to endure than death. You shall bear Me company in the humble prayer I offered at that time to My Father in My anguish. For this purpose you shall rise between eleven o'clock and midnight, and remain prostrate with Me during an hour, to appease the divine anger by begging mercy for sinners, and also to sweeten in some sort the bitterness which I felt at that time at being abandoned by My Apostles, and which obliged Me to reproach them for not having been able to watch with Me for one hour.

“ ‘ You shall do during this hour what I shall teach you. But listen, My Daughter, believe not lightly nor trust every spirit. Satan, who is furious against you, seeks to deceive you. Do nothing, therefore, without the approbation of those who conduct you, for as long as you are under obedience he will be unable to do you any harm. He has no power over the obedient.’ ”

“ During the whole of the time that this Vision lasted,” says Margaret Mary, “ I lost all consciousness, and when they came to withdraw me from the place where I was praying, I no longer

knew where I was. Seeing that I could not answer, or even support myself but with great difficulty, they led me to our Mother. I was quite out of myself, all burning and trembling. I threw myself on my knees before my Mother Superior, who mortified and humbled me severely." "This gave me," she says, "incredible joy; for I felt myself so great a criminal, and was so filled with confusion, that however rigorously I might have been treated, any treatment would have appeared to me too mild."

On her giving an account of what had taken place, the Mother Superior humbled her still more, and refused to allow her anything of what our Lord had asked of her, treating with contempt all that she described to her. "This," says Margaret Mary, "consoled me greatly, and I withdrew in peace."

The divine fire which was communicated to her during this Rapture, as it may be called, consumed her with such ardor as to throw her into a violent fever. The pleasure, however, which this suffering gave her prevented her complaining of it, and it was only betrayed by her strength failing her. The medical man, who was called in to attend her, declared that she had had the fever a long time upon her. She had, after this, as many as sixty different returns of it.

The fire with which she was consumed showed

the divine character of its origin by the love of suffering which it enkindled within her "Never," she says, "did I feel such consolation ; for my whole body suffered extreme pain, and this relieved a little the burning thirst I had for suffering. This devouring fire could only be fed by the fuel of the Cross, that is to say, with sufferings of every kind—contempt, humiliations, and pains."

The fever was so severe that it was supposed she would die. But our Lord favored her at this time with the following signal grace. Whilst she was in a trance, it seemed to her that the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity presented themselves to her under the form of three young men clothed in white and resplendent with light, and filled her soul with consolation. "It appeared to me," she says, "that the Eternal Father presented me with a great Cross, beset with thorns, and surrounded with the various instruments of the Passion, and said to me, 'See, My Daughter, I make you the same present which I made to My beloved Son.' 'And I,' said our Lord Jesus Christ, 'will fasten you to the Cross as I was fastened Myself, and will bear you faithful company.' The Third adorable Person, Who is Love, would, He told me, Himself consume and purify me thereon."

The effect of this Vision was to leave her soul in an inconceivable peace and joy. The im-

pression which it produced upon her was never afterwards effaced from her mind. "I did not understand at the time," she says, "as I did afterwards, the great sufferings which this signified that I should endure."

Margaret Mary was ordered to ask of our Lord to restore her health. Her Mother Superior wished by this to receive some assurance from our Lord Himself that the singular graces with which she was favored truly came from Him. She did as she was desired, but it was with a fear lest her request should be heard. On her being told, however, that the restoration of her health would be regarded as a sign that what passed in her came from the Spirit of God, and that she would be allowed to do what our Lord had commanded her, both as regards Communion on the first Fridays of the month and also the "Holy Hour," she represented the whole matter to our Lord, and at once recovered her health.

It was through the hands of our Blessed Lady that she was to receive this, as she had already received so many other favors. "The Blessed Virgin, my good Mother," she says, "favored me with her presence. She bestowed many caresses upon me, and after conversing with me for a long time, 'Take courage, my dear Daughter,' she said; 'I restore you your health at the will of my Divine Son. You have yet a long

and painful way to go, always upon the Cross, pierced with nails and thorns, and torn with scourges. But fear nothing ; I will not abandon you, and I promise you my protection.'” “ This promise,” observes Margaret Mary, “ she has since truly kept, in the pressing needs in which I have required her protection.”

So striking a miracle could hardly fail to set the mind of Mother de Saumaise at rest regarding the truth of the extraordinary favors bestowed upon Margaret Mary. But not wishing to trust her own judgment in the conduct of a soul called by Almighty God to such perfection, she thought it still her duty to consult some persons of learning upon the subject. Some of these her advisers failed to recognize the Spirit by which Margaret Mary was led. They condemned her remarkable attraction to prayer, treated her as a visionary, and would not allow her to follow the inspirations with which she was favored.

We may judge what must have been the suffering which this caused her. “ I made every effort,” she says, “ to resist these attractions, believing assuredly that I was deceived. But finding that it was to no purpose that I did so, I felt sure that God must have abandoned me ; for, on the one hand, I was told that it was not the Spirit of God that governed me, and, on the other, I found it impossible to resist the Spirit.”

St. Teresa describes with great feeling the suffering she was led to endure from similar misapprehension and opposition on the part of good persons ; and she was told by St. Peter of Alcantara that the contradiction which she had suffered from such persons was one of the severest trials to which any one could be exposed in this life. "As I saw then," she says, "that so many good persons were of the same mind, and that yet I could not bring myself to agree with them, I began to entertain a very great scruple regarding it, considering that I showed in this a great want of humility, and that since they were all incomparably better than myself, and at the same time very enlightened and clever, I was wrong in not deferring to their opinion. I did all I could to bring myself to submit ; and with this view recalling to mind all the disorders of my past life, I thought that, judging of things on this footing, it might be very possible that what they said was true." She prayed continually to Almighty God for nearly two years to conduct her by some other way, without, however, being able, as she says, to reconcile herself to the thought that it was possible that it could have been the devil who had spoken to her on so many occasions. Our Lord Himself, however, dissipated at once by a few words all her trouble. "Being on this occasion"—it is thus

she describes the occurrence—"all alone in an oratory, without having any one in whose company I could relieve my trouble, and without being able either to read or pray, like one oppressed with trouble and consternation, my heart filled with bitterness and sadness, and my mind possessed and agitated by this dreadful terror lest it was the devil who was deceiving me ; not knowing what to do with myself, I spent four or five hours in this cruel state of torture, finding no consolation either from Heaven or earth, abandoned by our Lord to suffering and to the apprehension of dangers of every kind. Whilst then I was in this great distress, the following words which I heard entirely calmed me at once, and made all my troubles disappear :-- ' Fear not, My Daughter, it is I ; I will not forsake you. Fear nothing.' "

It was by a similar assurance that our Lord calmed the apprehension with which Margaret Mary was agitated. He relieved her fears, and told her that He would shortly send His faithful servant, to whom He wished her to disclose, as He should direct, all the treasures and secrets of His Sacred Heart which He had confided to her, for He would send him to reassure and direct her in His way. We shall have occasion to see shortly who this faithful servant was.

Our Lord continued, in the meantime, to favor Margaret Mary with His sensible presence, and

assured her that He would never deprive her of it. "And in fact," she says, "He has never deprived me of it, whatever fault I committed."

But it was an insupportable torment to her to appear in the presence of His sanctity if she ever gave way to the least infidelity. "There is no kind of punishment," she says, "which I would not have chosen to undergo, rather than bear the presence of this God of Sanctity when my soul was blemished with any fault. I would rather a thousand times have thrown myself into a burning furnace." Thus, having on one occasion allowed herself to give way to some motion of vanity in speaking of herself, this fault cost her many tears and groans. Our Lord reproved her for it severely. "What have you to boast of," He said, "dust and ashes as you are? Of yourself you are nothing and misery, an abyss which you should never lose sight of. In order that the greatness of My gifts may not lead you to forget what you are, I will set before you your own picture." "He discovered to me upon this," she says, "this horrid picture, in which was represented in brief all I am. I was so horrified at it, and conceived such a horror of myself, that had He not supported me I should have fainted with terror. I could not understand the excess of His infinite mercy in not having plunged me into hell, and in bearing with me so long, seeing that I could not bear myself."

It was in this manner that our Lord commonly punished the slightest movement of self-satisfaction in her. She would on these occasions exclaim, "O my God, either let me die or take this picture from me. I cannot live if I look upon it!" The sight impressed her with an extreme hatred of herself, and as she was not allowed by obedience to exercise on herself the rigor which this feeling suggested to her, she suffered, she says, more than she could express. But in order to compensate as well as she could by obedience and humility, she never failed to accuse herself of her faults that she might receive a penance for them. Any penance, she tells us, however severe, appeared a relief to her, compared with the punishment which our Lord Himself inflicted on her.

In order the more to purify her soul, our Lord discovered to her defects in what appeared most pure and perfect. This He did more particularly on All Saints' Day, when she heard distinctly the following mysterious words—

No blemish finds a place in innocence;
Nothing is lost in power;
Nothing passes away in that abode of bliss;
All is there perfected in love.*

* Rien de souillé dans l'innocence;
Rien ne se perd dans la puissance,
Rien ne se passe en ce beau séjour;
Tout s'y consomme dans l'amour.

These words were afterwards explained to her, and their meaning, she says, occupied her mind for a long time.

“No blemish finds a place in innocence ;” that is to say, she was to allow no blemish in her soul or heart. “Nothing is lost in power ;” she was to resign and abandon all to Him, for He is power itself, and we can lose nothing in giving all to Him. The last two lines referred to Heaven, where nothing passes away, for all is eternal, and all is perfected there in love. “I was allowed,” she says, “a slight glimpse of this bliss. O God ! into what transports of joy did the sight throw me ! As I was in Retreat at the time, I passed the whole day in this ineffable joy, and it seemed to me in my transport that I had but to go and enter upon it at once. But I heard other words addressed to me, which soon gave me to understand that I was still far from this. The words were to the following effect—

In vain thy longing heart desires
To find an entrance there ;
Who to this heavenly bliss aspires,
On earth the Cross must bear.*

* C'est en vain que ton cœur soupire
Pour y entrer comme tu crois ;
Il ne faut pas qu' on y aspire
Que par le chemin de la Croix.

She was then shown all that she was to suffer during the remainder of her life. "My whole frame," she says, "shuddered at the sight, though I did not even then understand it as well as I have since done by my own experience."

At the same time, in order to comfort her amidst the fears which still troubled her in spite of every assurance she received, and in anticipation of the fulfilment of the promise which He had made, our Lord presented Himself to her, and disclosing to her His Sacred Heart, "This," He said, "is the Master I give you. It will teach you all you are to do for My love. You shall be, therefore, Its beloved Disciple." This gave her great joy, and she felt unable afterwards to have recourse to any other succor in her necessities and difficulties. "I prostrated myself," she says, "in spirit, when I could not do so bodily, in all my exercises. I made Him reparation for the injuries He received from hearts consecrated to Him, and I kept myself in His presence in the character of the beloved Disciple of His Sacred Heart. It was my repose, my retreat, and my strength when I found myself overwhelmed with pains and griefs caused by the sanctity of justice, which brought me to the verge of death. When He saw me reduced to this extremity, 'Come,' He said, 'and take your rest, that you may suffer with greater courage.'" "I felt myself," she says, "at once plunged into this furnace of love,

where I thought only of loving Him. I felt myself so strongly urged to this, that it seemed to me my soul was on the point of being separated from my body. My body was so wearied that I could not move one foot before the other. I was obliged to do continual violence to myself, lest it should be perceived. It seemed to me that the quiet of the night was only to allow me to enjoy the converse of my Divine Spouse, with Whom hours passed as though they were minutes."

It was in the character especially of the beloved Disciple of the Sacred Heart, as we have seen, that Margaret Mary was in the habit now of presenting herself before our Lord. She makes mention of an extraordinary favor which she received from Him, and which appears to have special reference to the mission designed for her as Apostle of the Sacred Heart. It was communicated to her upon the Feast of St. John, the beloved Disciple, who at the Last Supper reclined on the Sacred Heart of our Lord. It is possible that this may be the same apparition as that recorded above, in which our Divine Lord allowed Margaret Mary to recline upon His Breast, and disclosed to her the secrets of His Sacred Heart. It is recorded by Margaret Mary herself in an account which she drew up at the express order of her Confessor, Father Rolin, S.J.

“One day,” is the account she gives, “on the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, 1674, after having received from my Divine Saviour a favor almost similar to that bestowed upon the beloved Disciple on the evening of the Last Supper, the Divine Heart was represented to me as on a throne of fire and flames, shedding rays on every side brighter than the sun and transparent as crystal. The Wound which He received upon the Cross appeared there visibly ; a crown of thorns encircled the Divine Heart, and It was surmounted by a cross. These instruments of His Passion signified, as my Divine Master gave me to understand, that it was the unbounded love which He had for men that had been the source of all His sufferings ; that from the first moment of His Incarnation all these torments had been present to Him, and that from the first moment the Cross had been, so to say, planted in His Heart ; that from that moment He accepted all the pains and humiliations which His Sacred Humanity was to suffer during the course of His mortal life, and even the outrages to which His love for men exposed Him till the end of the world in the Blessed Sacrament. He gave me to understand afterwards that it was the great desire He had to be perfectly loved by men that had made Him form the design of disclosing to them His Heart, and of giving them in these latter times this last

effort of His love, by proposing to them an object and a means so calculated to engage them to love Him, and love Him solidly, opening to them all the treasures of love, mercy, and grace, of sanctification and salvation which It contains, in order that all whoshould wish to pay and procure for Him all the honor and love which they can, might be enriched in profusion with the divine treasures, of which It is the fruitful and inexhaustible source."

Margaret Mary mentions also the pleasure which our Divine Lord said He took in seeing His Sacred Heart visibly represented, in order that the hearts of men might be touched and powerfully drawn to Him by the cords of His Sacred Humanity. "He assured me besides," she says, "that He took a singular pleasure in being honored under the representation of this Heart of flesh, in order, He added, to touch the insensible hearts of men. And He promised me that He would shed in abundance on all who should honor It all the treasures of grace with which It is filled. Wherever this image shall be exposed for special veneration it shall draw down upon the spot every kind of blessing."

"But what caused me a kind of torture," she adds, "and what I felt more keenly than all the pains of which I have spoken, was, as I looked on this amiable Heart, to hear these words: 'I have a burning thirst to be honored by men in

the Blessed Sacrament, and I find hardly any one who strives according to My desire to allay this thirst by making Me some return.' ”

This singular favor left an indelible impression on the mind of Margaret Mary, which was renewed more especially each year on the recurrence of the Feast of St. John the Evangelist. About two years before her death, in January, 1689, writing to the Mother de Saumaise, she communicates to her in full confidence her sentiments on the occasion. “ It seemed to me, my good Mother,” she writes, “ that I must melt with confusion and gratitude when, on the day of the Feast of the beloved Disciple of our dear Beloved (Dec. 27, 1688), I called to mind that it was on this day that my Divine Spouse did me the incomprehensible favor, of which I am so unworthy, of making me repose upon His Breast with His beloved Disciple, and of giving me His Heart, His Cross, and His love. His Heart to be my refuge and haven of rest amidst the tempests of this stormy sea ; His Cross to be my throne of glory, in which I should not only glory but also rejoice, since there is no good for me but Jesus, His Cross, and His love ; His love to purify and consume me, and transform me wholly into Himself.”

From the time of this Vision she could not contain the sentiments of ardent love which she felt for Jesus Christ. “ I should have wished,”

she says, "to spread it abroad on every occasion by my words, supposing that others received the same graces as myself and entertained the same sentiments. But I was dissuaded from this by the Reverend Father de La Colombière, as also in consequence of the great opposition I met with in so doing. All the pleasure I had in this, and the advantage which I derived from this little excess of zeal and fervor, consisted in their procuring me some humiliations and a little trial, which lasted several years, for the love of the Sacred Heart."

Margaret Mary here makes mention of Father de La Colombière. It was in him that she was to find the verification of the promise made to her by our Lord, that He would send her His faithful servant, to whom she was to make known the treasures and secrets of His Sacred Heart which had been entrusted to her, and who was to guide her with confidence in His way.





CHAPTER XIII.

1674—1675.

IT was towards the close of the year 1674, or at the beginning of the following year, that Father de La Colombière came to Paray-le-Monial as Superior of the Residence established by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus in that town.

Father Claude de La Colombière, as yet but young, was highly distinguished by natural gifts, but more especially by his zeal and piety. His sermons, as they are handed down to us, are distinguished by high spirituality and depth of thought. He had lately taken an important step in spiritual life, by binding himself by vow to observe with fidelity the rules and constitutions of his Institute. Before taking his final resolution he was able to say: "It seems to me that for some time I have been living almost as I shall be obliged to live after I have taken this vow, and it is rather from the desire of engaging myself to perseverance than from that of doing anything new and extraordinary that I have entertained this thought." "I rely," he adds, "neither on my resolution nor on my own strength, but on the goodness of God, which

is infinite, and His grace, which He never fails to communicate abundantly, and the more so in proportion as we strive to do more for His service." Every other testimony to the character of this holy Religious is superseded by the title by which he was designated to Margaret Mary by our Blessed Lord Himself as "His faithful servant."

The first time that Father de La Colombière saw the Community at Paray, Margaret Mary heard interiorly the words, "This is the person whom I send you." She had soon an opportunity of proving the truth of these words, for, on occasion of the first confession which she made to him, at the season of the Ember Days, during the Lent of 1675, though they had never conversed together, Father de La Colombière spoke with her, as she describes it herself, as if he understood all that was passing in her mind. She did not wish to open her mind to him upon this first interview; but as he saw that she wished to retire for fear of inconveniencing the Community, he told her that, if she pleased, he would come to see her another time and speak with her in the same place. Her natural timidity led her to reply that, not being at her own disposal, she would do whatever obedience should order her.

A short time after, Father de La Colombière, having occasion to give an exhortation to the

Community, was struck with the appearance of Margaret Mary, and inquired of the Reverend Mother de Saumaise, after the Conference, who that young Religious was, describing the place which she had occupied. On being informed, he told the Mother Superior that she was a chosen soul. Mother de Saumaise shortly afterwards sent for Father de La Colombière, and desired Margaret Mary to lay open her mind to him. Margaret Mary went as she was desired, though with a feeling of extreme repugnance. This she expressed to Father de La Colombière on seeing him. He replied "that he was very glad to have given her an opportunity of making a sacrifice for God." "Then, without pain or trouble," she says, "I opened my heart to him, and discovered to him the bottom of my soul, good and bad alike." She received from him in return great consolation. He assured her that she had nothing to fear in the guidance of the Spirit which acted in her, as long as it did not withdraw her from obedience; that she ought to follow His movement, and abandon herself wholly to His will, to be sacrificed and immolated according to His good pleasure. "He expressed his admiration," she says, "at the goodness of God in not having been repelled by so much resistance on my part. He taught me to value the gifts of God, and to receive with respect and humility the frequent communica-

tions and familiar converse with which He favored me; adding that I ought to be employed in constant thanksgiving for such great goodness."

Margaret Mary explained to him the inability she felt, in spite of all her efforts, to pray vocally, in consequence of the close union in which our Lord kept her soul absorbed in Him. Father de La Colombière told her to be satisfied with saying such vocal prayers as were of obligation, adding the Rosary when she could. On her describing to him, she says, some of the special caresses and favors which were lavished upon her by her Divine Spouse, and the ineffable union of love which she enjoyed, he told her that she had in this great subject for humiliation, and that he admired herein the great mercy of God in her regard.

But our Lord, who would have her receive no consolation but such as was accompanied by humiliation, permitted this spiritual communication with Father de La Colombière to be the source of many humiliations to her. Father de La Colombière himself had also much to suffer on her account. It was said that she wished to deceive him also by her illusions, as she had already deceived so many others. "But this," she says, "gave him no trouble. He continued to give me his assistance during the short time he remained in the town, and he has done so

ever since. I have been astonished many a time that he did not abandon me as others had done, for the manner in which I treated him would have repulsed any one else." Father de La Colombière, on his part, seeing the great graces with which our Lord favored Margaret Mary, lost no opportunity, in order to secure these graces to her, of humbling and mortifying her. "This," she remarks, "gave me great pleasure."

Our Lord would give Margaret Mary a further assurance that He had sent Father de La Colombière to assist her in the work for which He designed her, of promoting the Devotion to His Sacred Heart. One day, as Father de La Colombière was saying Mass in the church of the monastery, upon Margaret Mary approaching to receive Holy Communion, our Lord showed her His Sacred Heart as a burning furnace. She saw, at the same time, two hearts on the point of uniting themselves to It, and being absorbed, as it were, in It. She heard also, at the same time, these words: "It is thus that My pure love unites these three hearts forever." "He gave me to understand," she says, "that this union would be wholly for the glory of His Sacred Heart, the treasures of which He wished that I should discover to the Father, in order that he might make their true value known; and that, to this end, He wished that we should be as brother and sister, sharing

equally in these spiritual goods." "I hereupon," she adds, "represented to Him my poverty, and the inequality there was between a man of such great virtue and a poor wretched sinner like myself. Upon this He said to me: 'The infinite riches of My heart will supply for all and make all equal. Let him know this, and fear nothing.' This I accordingly did at our first interview." The sentiments of humility and thanksgiving with which Father de La Colombière received this announcement, as also others concerning himself which she made him on the part of our Lord, struck her so much that she profited by it, she says, more than she could have done by any sermons she might have heard.

Margaret Mary also mentioned to Father de La Colombière the communications she received from our Lord regarding certain souls to whom He wished her to discover them for His glory, either by word or writing, as He should let her know. She was not to trouble herself about the way of saying or writing them, for He would Himself attach to them the unction of His grace, to produce the effect He intended in those who received them well. She mentioned to Him the repugnance she felt to write some of these communications, which brought on her great humiliations. Father de La Colombière desired her to follow the interior suggestions she should receive on this matter, whatever trouble or humiliations

it might cost her ; to say with simplicity what she was inspired to say, to present to her Mother Superior the notes she had written, and to do what she should order her. "I kept to this advice," she says, "but it brought upon me much abjection on the part of creatures."

Father de La Colombière ordered her also to write an account of what passed within her. This she felt a great repugnance to do. She wrote, however, in order to do what she was told, but afterwards burned what she had written, persuading herself that, in so doing, she had satisfied obedience. "But I suffered much in consequence," she says. "What was said to me on the subject gave me a scruple about it, and I was forbidden to do so any more."

It was about this time (June, 1675), that Margaret Mary received the last signal favor, in which Father de La Colombière was appointed by name to assist her, relating to the establishment of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. She was ordered by Father de La Colombière to put the account of it in writing, and he quotes this account in the journal of the Retreat which he made shortly after his arrival in London in 1677. It was the publication of the journal of his Retreats after his death which first led to the Devotion becoming generally known.

"Finishing this Retreat," he says, "full of confidence in the mercy of my God, I resolved to

procure, by all means in my power, the execution of what had been enjoined me on the part of my adorable Master, by procuring the accomplishment of His desires regarding the Devotion which He has suggested to a person to whom He communicates Himself very confidentially, and for which he has been pleased to make use of my weakness.

“Our Lord having, then, disclosed Himself to this person, who, there is reason to believe, is according to His Heart, from the great favors He has done her, she explained herself to me on the subject. I obliged her to put in writing what she had told me, and I have thought it well to give an account of it myself in the journal of my Retreat, since our Lord wishes to make use of my poor aid in the execution of this design.

“‘As I was before the Blessed Sacrament,’ says this holy soul, ‘on a day within the Octave of Corpus Christi, I received from my God excessive graces of His love. Feeling myself touched with a desire of making Him some return, and of rendering Him love for love, “You cannot make Me any greater return of love,” He said, “than by doing what I have so often asked of you.” And discovering to me His Divine Heart, “See this Heart,” He said, “which has loved men so much that It has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming Itself, in order

to testify to them Its love ; and in return I receive from the greater part only ingratitude, by reason of the contempt, irreverence, sacrilege, and coldness which they show Me in this Sacrament of Love. But what I feel still more is that they are hearts consecrated to Me who use Me thus. On this account, I ask of you that the first Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi be set apart for a special Feast to honor My Heart, by communicating on that day and making reparation to It by a solemn act to repair the indignities which It has received during the time It has been exposed on My altars. I also promise you that My Heart shall expand Itself to shed in abundance the influence of Its divine love upon those who shall pay It this honor and procure it to be paid.”

“ ‘ But to whom, O Lord, dost Thou address Thyself ? ’ she said to Him, ‘ to a poor creature and so wretched a sinner that her unworthiness would be even capable of hindering the accomplishment of Thy design. Thou hast so many generous souls to execute it. ’ ‘ What, do you not know, ’ said our Divine Lord, ‘ that I make use of the weakest instruments to confound the strong, and that it is in the little and the poor of spirit that My power commonly manifests itself with the greatest splendor, in order that they may attribute nothing to themselves ? ’ ‘ Do Thou, then, give me the means, ’ she replied, ‘ of doing

what Thou commandest.' Upon this, our Lord added—'Address yourself to My servant N.,* and tell him from Me to do what he can to establish this Devotion, and to give this pleasure to My Divine Heart. Let him not be discouraged at the difficulties he will meet with, for there will be no lack of them; but he must remember that those are all-powerful who distrust themselves and place their whole confidence in Me.' "

Father de La Colombière was a person of clear discernment and strong judgment, and not inclined to give credence on insufficient grounds; but he was too well satisfied of the solid virtue of Margaret Mary to allow him to fear illusion in this matter. The resolution he now took was only a confirmation of that which he had seen good grounds for adopting before. He had not waited for the time of his Retreat to carry into effect the wishes of our Divine Lord. In order to lay a solid foundation of the work, he determined to begin with himself, and on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, which

* This was Father de La Colombière: "His servant, whom He had sent to me for the accomplishment of this design," are the words in which Margaret Mary describes him in the account which she gives of this Vision in her own narrative of her life, drawn up by her by order of Father Rolin, S.J.

fell this year (1675), on the 21st of June, the Feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, he consecrated himself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This day, the Feast of a Saint, who, according to the testimony of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, was distinguished whilst on earth by his hidden but burning love for the Heart of the Incarnate Word, may be regarded perhaps as that on which this Devotion made its first conquest.

The extraordinary graces which this holy Father received from the practice of this Devotion confirmed him in the idea which he had formed of its solidity and value. He did not fail to inculcate it upon his penitents, and recommended them to communicate on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

His advice and direction during the two years that he remained at Paray were a source of great consolation to Margaret Mary, for whose guidance he had been so specially sent. He instructed her how best to correspond with the designs of our Lord in her regard, and reassured her amidst the great fears she constantly entertained of being deceived. Margaret Mary, on the other hand, was enabled by the supernatural light she received to render him valuable assistance. She spoke of his quitting France some time before his Superiors had entertained the thought of designing him for any such mission.

He received, indeed, two contradictory orders one after the other, and as he was preparing to act upon the last he received a final order to repair to Paris preparatory to crossing to England.

Margaret Mary received this blow with perfect conformity to the will of God, Who had allowed him to render her such service during his residence at Paray. When she was inclined merely to allow her thoughts to dwell momentarily upon it, our Lord reproached her, saying—"What! am I not sufficient for you, I Who am your first beginning and last end?" "This was enough," she says, "to lead me to abandon myself entirely to Him."

Before his departure for England, Father de La Colombière left with her the following brief but comprehensive instruction for her guidance :—

"Remember," he says, "That God asks of you everything and nothing. He asks everything, because He would reign over you and within you, as in what belongs wholly to Him, so as to dispose of all, that nothing may resist Him, everything bend to Him and obey the least sign of His will. He asks nothing of you, because He would do everything in you, without your interfering in anything, contenting yourself with being the subject on which and in which He acts, in order that all the glory may be His, and

that He alone may be known, praised, and loved forever."

Father de La Colombière received, on his part, from Margaret Mary some notes of instruction which served to guide him in the important work on which he was entering. We shall have occasion to see of what incalculable advantage they proved to him amidst the numerous embarrassments with which he found himself beset in his new and perilous mission.





CHAPTER XIV.

1676—1677.

IT was indeed a difficult and delicate mission on which Father de La Colombière was engaged. The position of Chaplain to the Duchess of York at the English Court demanded singular prudence, zeal, courage, and superior abilities as a preacher. Had we no other testimony regarding Father de La Colombière, the fact of his being selected by his Superiors for this post would alone supply sufficient evidence of the opinion they entertained of his merits.

The strong Protestant feeling in England, though apparently somewhat allayed by the return of the Stuarts, had burst forth afresh, and culminated shortly afterwards in the introduction of the Prince of Orange by the revolution of 1688. The conditions of the Test Act had obliged the Duke of York, from motives of conscience, to resign the command of the fleet, and the Duchess of York, Mary of Modena, was refused by the King the use of a public chapel, which had been guaranteed to her by the terms of her marriage contract. Father St. Germain, a French Jesuit, who had attended her as Chaplain, was forced to return to France to place his

life in safety. We may judge, then, what treatment might be looked for by his successor. We know what were the penalties attached to the crime of being a Catholic, and yet more a Jesuit. It was death for any English subject convicted of having received Holy Orders at the hands of a Catholic Bishop; imprisonment for assisting at Mass even in the Queen's chapel. The Queen, Catherine of Portugal, was, like the Duchess of York, a pious Catholic. Thus, strange to say, the three persons nearest to the throne professed the proscribed religion. Charles II. himself, as is now satisfactorily established by historical documents, had secretly abjured Protestantism; but this, instead of favoring the Church, only served as an inducement to the weak monarch, in order to avoid suspicion, to sanction atrocities against Catholics worthy of the worst days of Elizabeth and Henry VIII.

Such was the perilous post to which Father de La Colombière was called on quitting the humble Residence of Paray-le-Monial. It was here that he began to fulfil the engagements he had entered into with the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and experienced in return the tender love and generosity of the Sacred Heart.

Arriving in London on the 13th of October, 1676, he lived in his apartments in St. James' Palace as a true Religious. His great consolation he found in his Rules, to which he had

bound himself so closely, and he observed them as faithfully as he would have done in a House of his Order. "I find in them," he says, in one of his letters, "so many advantages that, were I alone upon an island at the extremity of the world, I could, it seems to me, do without all else, and that I should desire no other help, provided God gave me grace to keep them. Happy is he who can treasure them up in his heart, and appreciate all they contain." *

After he had been about ten months in London, he wrote to his brother: "Amidst the general corruption which heresy has produced in this great city, I meet with numerous examples of fervent and perfect virtue, a rich harvest ready for the sickle, and which falls beneath the hand which God is pleased to make use of for His purpose. The Princess whom I serve is thoroughly good in every sense of the word, most exemplary for her piety, and of a most amiable disposition. For myself, I am as quiet in the midst of the tumult of the Court as if I were in a desert, and it is my own fault if I am not as much under Rule as in one of our own Houses."

He preached two Lents before the Duchess of York, as well as on the Sundays and Feasts

* Father Claude de La Colombière: *Spiritual Letters*.

during eighteen months. He received the praise which his sermons elicited with a coldness which checked it, and he added to the vows he had already taken another, never to say anything which could turn to his own praise. The zeal with which he burned gave him no respite in his labors for the good of souls. We have, unfortunately, no historical record of the details of his apostolical life, but we may form some judgment of their fruits from the titles applied to him by Blessed Margaret Mary in the litany which she composed in his honor, and which she used to recite after his death. She addressed him as *Voice of an Apostle, Buckler of the Catholic Faith, Destroyer of Heresy*. She declared that, "He had employed all his eloquence in making known the greatness of God, converting sinners to penance, and drawing heretics to a true conversion."

The greatest and most constant source of grief to Father de La Colombière in London was to live in a country in which the Blessed Sacrament was so outraged. The Test Act attacked directly the doctrine of the Real Presence of our Blessed Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. The circumstances, then, in which he lived led him to call to mind in a special manner all that our Lord expected of him, and all that He had intimated to him through Margaret Mary respecting the wishes of His Sacred Heart

In the journal of the Retreat which he made shortly after his arrival in London, and part of which has been quoted above, he writes as follows: "I determined to procure in every way in my power the execution of what had been enjoined me by my adorable Master in regard of His precious Body in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, in which I believe Him to be truly and really present. Touched with compassion for those poor blinded souls who refuse to submit to believe this great and ineffable Mystery, I would gladly shed my blood to persuade them of this truth which I believe and profess. In this country, which prides itself on doubting Thy real presence in the august Sacrament, I feel a great consolation in making several times a day acts of faith regarding the reality of Thy adorable Body under the appearance of bread and wine." And a little further on: "I have understood that God wishes me to serve Him by procuring the accomplishment of His desires in regard of the Devotion which He has suggested to a person to whom He communicates Himself very confidentially, and for which He has been pleased to make use of my weakness. I have already recommended it to many persons in England, and I have written regarding it to France, and begged of one of my friends to make it known in the place where he is. . . . Would, O my God, that I could publish every-

where what it is that Thou lookest for from Thy servants and friends.

“God, then, having made Himself known to this person, who, there is reason to believe, is according to His Heart, on account of the great graces which He has conferred upon her, she spoke on the subject to me, and I obliged her to put in writing what she had said to me. I have wished to mention this in the journal of my Retreats, seeing that our good God wishes to make use of my poor services in carrying out His designs.”

Then follows the account of the revelation made to Margaret Mary during the Octave of Corpus Christi in the year 1675, which has been already given in the preceding chapter. Hereupon Father de La Colombière renews the offering of himself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and concludes with the following prayer :

“O Sacred Heart of Jesus, do Thou teach me an entire forgetfulness of myself, since there is no other way of entering into Thee. Grant that I may do nothing that is not worthy of Thee. Teach me what I ought to do to attain to Thy pure love, with the desire of which Thou hast inspired me. I feel in myself a great wish to please Thee, and a great inability to do so without a special light and assistance, which I can look for only from Thee. Do Thou accomplish Thy will, O Lord, in me. I oppose it, I know

well ; but I would fain not do so. It is for Thee, O Divine Heart of Jesus, to do all ; Thine alone shall be the glory of my sanctification if I become a Saint. This is as clear to me as the day. It will be greatly to Thy glory ; and it is for this alone that I desire to be perfect. Amen."

Preaching on the Feast of Corpus Christi, in St. James' Chapel, he turns from the remembrance of the ingratitude of mankind in regard of this adorable Sacrament of Love, to the thought of the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord as the only means of making reparation and return. "What wilt Thou do then, O Lord," he asks, "to conquer such hardness of heart? Thou hast exhausted Thyself in this Mystery of Love ; Thou hast gone as far, the holy Fathers tell us, as Thy power can reach. If the sacred touch of Thy Body is unable to destroy this infernal spell, we cannot hope that any other remedy will have the power." But the thought of the Sacred Heart presents itself to his mind, and he concludes as follows : "I see but one remedy for so great an evil. Thou must Thyself, O God, give us a new heart in place of a marble and iron heart, a heart that is capable of feeling ; Thou must Thyself give us Thy own Heart. O amiable Heart of Jesus ! do Thou take possession of my heart, and kindle within it a love which may correspond, if it be possible, to the obligation I am under of loving

God. Do Thou love Jesus in me as Thou hast loved me in Him ; grant that I may live only in Him and for Him, in order that I may live with Him in Heaven."

Whilst Father de La Colombière was thus spreading the divine fire of the Sacred Heart in England, Margaret Mary was aiding him by her prayers and the instructions which she communicated to him from time to time as she received light from Heaven respecting the difficulties in which he was placed. Father de La Colombière continued on his part to direct her. He wrote, indeed, but rarely to her, and he had in view not so much to direct her as to confirm her in humility. He kept up, however, a regular correspondence with the Reverend Mother de Sau-maise. All the letters on either side passed through her hands, and thus this wise Superior was able to attest the following facts regarding them, which she has herself left recorded in the memoir written by her after the death of Blessed Margaret Mary.

The note which Father de La Colombière had received from Margaret Mary at his departure from Paray contained the three following points :—

1. " Father de La Colombière's talent is to lead souls to God ; the devils will therefore do all they can against him. He will meet with trouble even from persons consecrated to God,

who will not approve of what he will say in his sermons to bring souls to God; but His goodness will be his support under his crosses, in proportion to the confidence he places in Him.

2. "He should have compassion and gentleness for sinners, and employ force only when God shall let him know.

3. "Let him have a great care not to draw the good from its source.* This is a brief saying, but it contains a great deal, which God will enable him to understand according to the application he bestows upon it."

What an assistance this note proved to him in the difficult position in which he was placed will appear from a letter which he wrote to Mother de Saumaise, dated Feb. 7, 1677, a few days after the first Retreat which he made in London. "You will be glad to hear," he says, "that the note which you gave me at my departure was filled with almost as many mysteries as words. I did not understand the meaning of it until making my Retreat, ten days ago. Our Lord had indeed omitted nothing, and had provided me with preservatives against every evil which could happen to me. It would take me too long," he says, "to tell you all the treasures

* "Qu'il ait grand soin de ne point tirer le bien de sa source." The expression is obscure in the original, as is indeed implied in the subsequent account.

which I have discovered in this short notice. All that I can say is, that if it is the evil spirit who dictated it, he acts very much against himself, considering that I have derived from it such great help against his attacks, and that it produces in me all the effects which the Holy Spirit is wont to produce." "I mentioned to you in my last letter," he writes again in the following month, "several very remarkable circumstances connected with this paper, but it is impossible for me to tell you all I feel regarding them."

As regards the three several points contained in the paper, the first point, he thought, when considering them during his Retreat, towards the end of January, 1677, had only been in part realized. This he mentioned in the letter which he wrote to Mother de Saumaise after his Retreat. "All has been verified," he says, "with the exception of the persecution spoken of in the first point, which a person consecrated to God was to raise against me. For, as regards those which the devil was to raise against me, there is indeed no kind of snare that he has not laid for me." Upon this remark being communicated by Mother de Saumaise to Margaret Mary, she replied that she still continued confirmed in the same view. Father de La Colombière was not long in recognizing the justice of the view taken by Margaret Mary. "You have good reason," he writes to Mother de Saumaise:

"to tell me that our dear Sister Alacoque remained firm in her opinion regarding the contents of the first point of the first note, the same which you gave me on my leaving. I had need of this notice exactly at the time you wrote to me. I think it regarded the Ecclesiastic who was to give me trouble concerning what I said in order to draw souls to God. Up to that time I had not seen this verified. But it has happened at length with regard to the person whom I mentioned to you as having given herself to God without it having cost any trouble. I be-thought myself of it, thanks be to God, just in time on the first occasion. This helped greatly to strengthen me ; for I was tempted to give up all for fear of an outburst which might have given scandal and injured charity."

As regards the two other points ; "The second and third points," he says, writing to Mother de Saumaise, "were of the greatest importance for the repose of my life, and my perfection. I imagined at first, and I continued so to think for three months, that they were only general instructions intended for my whole life ; but I have had reason to understand that they were counsels for present occasions, and remedies against thoughts and plans which troubled me and were much opposed to those of God."

"It is only a fortnight ago," he writes again, "that I came to understand the two points of

the paper which I brought from Paray, in which I was recommended to be gentle and compassionate with sinners. I do not doubt that this has reference to the first person who presented herself to me after my arrival. Our Lord sees clearly the need I have of being forewarned."

As regards the third point in particular, he had been for a long time unable to understand the meaning of the words, "Let him have a great care not to draw the good from its source." It was only during his Retreat that he came to understand it. "It is true," he says in the journal of the Retreat, "that I had often examined the expression without being able to understand it. To-day (the fifth day of his Retreat), having remarked that it was said that God would enable me to understand it according as I should apply my mind to it, I meditated for a considerable time upon it without discovering any other meaning than that I should refer to God all the good He was pleased to do by my means. But after having with difficulty turned my thoughts aside from this consideration, suddenly a light was poured in as it were on my mind, and I saw clearly that it supplied the solution of a doubt which had troubled me during the first two or three days of my Retreat on the subject of my pension.* I understood that this expression

* This was a pension which Father de La Colombière received from his family, and which might have been

comprised, indeed, a great deal, for it led me to the perfection of poverty." "I cannot tell you," he says, writing shortly afterwards to Mother de Saumaise, "the joy which this light gave me."

Mother de Saumaise continued from time to time to communicate to Father de La Colombière the notes which were sent him by Margaret Mary. She used her own judgment, however, as to the time of sending them, and we shall see from the following fact in what manner Margaret Mary was guided in the advice she gave him, and also, from the letters of Father de La Colombière, in what esteem he held the advice which he received from her. On

of great assistance to him under the extraordinary circumstances in which he was placed.

Father de La Colombière had, indeed, already bound himself by vow to observe the counsel thus mysteriously imparted to him before he was led to understand the meaning of the words in which it was conveyed. "What is very admirable in this, and what makes me see how good Thou art, O my God," he writes in the journal of his Retreat, "is that Thou gavest me the grace to bind myself by vow to follow this counsel before enabling me to understand it. I cannot say what joy, what sentiments of gratitude, what confidence in God, what courage this has given me. . . . Praised for ever be our Lord, Who would thus manifest to me His mercy, and the sanctity of the person through whom He has been pleased to give me these counsels."

one occasion, Mother de Saumaise, as we learn from her own account, kept the note which Margaret Mary had given her to send to Father de La Colombière ; but observing, from what he wrote to her, that he stood in need of the advice contained in it, without speaking of the matter to any one, she made a copy of the note, intending to send it to the Father. Upon this, Margaret Mary came to her, and told her that, since she thought well to send the note to Father de La Colombière, no change should be made in it. Mother de Saumaise was greatly surprised, and on reading over again what she had written, she found that she had in fact, by mistake, made rather an important change in the copy. ‘ I cannot tell you,” Father de La Colombière writes to Mother de Saumaise, in November, 1677, “ what consolation your letter has given me. The note of Sister Alacoque has given me great strength, and reassures me on the subject of numberless doubts which present themselves to me every day. I am in great difficulty regarding what it is she desires of me, and I do not know what answer to give her. Our Lord does not discover Himself to me as He does to her, and I am far from giving her advice in anything. Nevertheless, to satisfy her humility, I will write to her to-day.” In the April of the following year, 1678, he writes : “ I thank you most humbly for the letter of Sister

Alacoque. I will answer her, and if you think it well to give her the answer, do so, but if not, do what you please with it. I am greatly edified with all that she writes to me ; and am so strongly confirmed in my belief of what our Lord discovers to her, either as regards the past or the future, that I think I have no longer any merit in believing." "I do not think," he writes in the following May, "that, without the note containing the instructions of Sister Alacoque, I could ever have borne the troubles which I endured, and which never attacked me with greater violence than when I was pressed and in a manner overwhelmed with work." "We must indeed refer our success," he writes again the same month, "to Him Who can make our labors succeed, according to the salutary advice sent me once by Sister Alacoque. I have received three or four such notices from her, and they serve me as a rule for my conduct, and form all the happiness of my life. Blessed forever be God, who deigns to enlighten us poor blind creatures by the lights of those who communicate most intimately with Him."

In June he writes again : "Sister Alacoque's letter has caused me great confusion. But I cannot tell you how opportunely her advice has come. Had she read the very bottom of my soul she could not have said anything more exactly to the purpose."

Such was the opinion entertained by Father de La Colombière of the advice he received from Margaret Mary. We see no less clearly from his letters the esteem in which he held her sanctity. Writing to Mother de Saumaise from London in November, 1676, about a month after his arrival, he says, "We do not meet here with Daughters of Holy Mary, and much less with a Sister Alacoque; but God is to be found everywhere where we seek Him, and He claims our love no less in London than at Paray. I thank Him with all my heart for the favor He confers upon me in my being remembered by that holy Religious. I do not doubt that her prayers bring great graces upon me." "What joy all that you say regarding this good Sister gives me!" he writes in the November of the following year; "how admirable and how amiable is God in His Saints!" "I would gladly," he writes again, "reply to the letter of the holy Sister Alacoque, which has edified me extremely; but I feel quite incapable of saying anything to her, and I fear so much interrupting her interior occupation that I cannot make up my mind to follow my own inclination. I regard her as most wise and enlightened, and am persuaded that God communicates Himself to her in a most particular manner."

A few months before his return to France, Father de La Colombière wrote to Mother de

Saumaise, during September, 1678, in terms which showed that he was quite unaware at the time of the circumstances which were soon to determine his quitting England. "What makes me believe," he says, "that I shall be here still for some time is that fresh fruit is presenting itself for cultivation, and that our good Sister Alacoque speaks to me only of fresh labors. I received your letter, and the enclosed paper in her handwriting, on the very day that I had spoken to the physician, and at a time that I found myself so weak and prostrate that I felt hardly fit for the labors which I foresee next year, and I looked upon my ailment as an effect of the providence of God, Who, knowing my inability to bear the burden, wished to withdraw me from this country. I had made up my mind to this; but after having read the note which desired me not to lose courage on account of difficulties, and bade me remember that whoever trusts in God is all-powerful, I began to change my mind, and to think that I should still remain here."

Strengthened then by the prayers and advice of his holy assistant, Father de La Colombière exhibited in his apostolic life a wonderful combination of the most active and ardent zeal with the greatest interior recollection. It is remarkable, indeed, to observe the change that had taken place in him as recorded by himself in the

journal of his Retreats. Before his coming to Paray-le-Monial, in the very Retreat in which he had taken the generous step of binding himself by vow to the observance of his Rule, he had written as follows : "I did not feel any very great zeal to labor for the salvation of my neighbor, when I considered the second of our Rules. It seems to me that I have had more at other times. I do not know if I deceive myself, but I think that what cools me most on this point is the fear I have of seeking myself in the employments in which this zeal is shown. For it seems to me that there is none in which nature does not find her account, especially when one succeeds, as we should desire to do, for the glory of God. It requires great grace and great strength to resist the charm which is found in changing hearts, and in the confidence reposed in us by persons whose hearts we have touched." "As regards what commonly terrifies nature," he writes again, "such as prisons, constant sickness, even death itself, all this appears to me pleasant compared with the perpetual war which has to be waged against one's self, with that vigilance which must be exercised against the surprises of the world and of self-love, and with this dying life in the midst of the world. When I think of this, life, it seems to me, will be terribly long, and death will never come soon enough."

How different is what he writes in his Retreat of 1677: "I find myself," he says, "in quite an opposite disposition to what I was in two years ago. I was then wholly possessed by fear, and I did not feel at all drawn to works of zeal, from the apprehension I was in of not being able to escape the snares of an active life, in which I saw that my vocation would engage me. Now the fear is all gone, and everything in me leads me to labor for the salvation and sanctification of souls. It seems to me that I wish to live only for this, and that I desire to become a Saint only because it is an admirable means of gaining many hearts to Jesus Christ." "When left to myself," he writes again towards the end of his journal, "I feel, by the infinite mercy of God, in a liberty of heart which gives me incomparable joy. I feel raised above all the monarchs of the earth by the honor I enjoy of belonging wholly to God. I feel that to know and love Him is better than to reign, and though I have sometimes thoughts of ambition and vain glory, certainly all the glory of the world, apart from the knowledge and love of God, would not tempt me."

Such was the wonderful change wrought by our Lord in Father de La Colombière after he had once given himself wholly to Him by the consecration which, at the instance of Margaret Mary, he made of himself to His Sacred Heart.



CHAPTER XV.

1676—1678.

WHILST Margaret Mary was thus supporting Father de La Colombière in his apostolic labors by her prayers and counsels, she continued to offer herself to Almighty God in sacrifice in the retirement of the cloister. Our Lord continued on His part to lavish His graces upon her, and prepared her especially to fulfil that character of victim to His offended justice which He had not ceased from the beginning of her religious life to foreshadow to her.

With a view, as it would seem, to this, He appeared to her one day and offered her in the following Vision the choice of a happy or a suffering life. "One day," as she describes the occurrence herself, "this only love of my soul presented Himself to me, bearing in one hand the picture of the happiest life which one can imagine to one's self for a religious soul, a life of peace and interior and exterior consolation, joined to perfect health, the applause and esteem of creatures, and the enjoyment of all one can conceive agreeable to nature; in the other hand He bore the picture of a poor and abject life,

constantly crucified by every kind of humiliation, contempt, and contradiction, and constantly suffering in body and soul. Presenting to me these two pictures, 'Choose, My Daughter,' He said, "which you prefer. I will give you the same graces whichever of the two you choose." Margaret Mary's love for our Lord was too great to allow of her making any choice. She replied that she wished only for Him, and that she would only choose what He should choose for her Himself. Our Lord would, however, try her still further, and He pressed her to make a choice. Still, however, her reply was that He alone was sufficient for her, and she begged of Him to do with her whatever would be most for His glory. "Do what Thou pleasest," she said, "and it is enough for me." Our Lord, satisfied at length, expressed His approbation of her choice, and promised to reward it by giving her Himself. He told her that she had chosen, like Magdalen, the better part, and that it should not be taken from her, for He would be Himself her inheritance forever. Presenting her then with the picture of a suffering life, "This," He said, "is what I have chosen for you. It is this which pleases Me most, both for the accomplishment of My designs, and also in order to make you like Myself. The other is a life of enjoyment, and not of merit ; it is reserved for eternity." Margaret Mary accepted the picture of a dying and suffer-

ing life, and kissed the hand which presented it to her. Though she shuddered, as she says, at the sight, she embraced it with affection and pressed it to her heart. It appeared, as she describes it, to impress itself on her whole being, and she seemed to herself as though she were no longer anything but a compound of all that she had seen represented in it. Still, true to the lessons of obedience she had received, she left the final decision to her Mother Superior. "I left the judgment of all," she adds, "to my Mother Superior, from whom I could conceal nothing."

Our Lord had confided Margaret Mary, as we have seen, to His Blessed Mother from her earliest years. The Blessed Virgin would therefore take part in making known to her chosen Daughter the office she was to fulfil. With this view, she disclosed to her in a Vision some of the defects of the Community for which our Lord wished her to make reparation. "I received," she says, "great proofs of her protection on the day of her glorious Assumption. She showed me a crown which she had made for herself of all her holy Daughters who had followed in her steps, and gave me to understand that it had been her wish to appear adorned with it in the presence of the Blessed Trinity. But it was a great sorrow to her, she told me, that whilst she wished to quit the earth, she found these flowers with which she had adorned

herself still attached to it, so that there remained only fifteen. Of these, five were received as Spouses of her Son."

"Another time," she says, "she showed me the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a fountain of living water, from whence flowed five channels into five hearts of this Community, which He had chosen to fill with this divine stream. Below were five others which received a good deal, but through their fault they allowed the precious water to escape."

The special work of reparation, however, to which she was called was still more clearly indicated to Margaret Mary on the following occasion. "Another time," she says, "I was shown five hearts which this loving Heart was ready to reject, and regarded with horror. Far, however, from desiring to know what this meant, I begged that I might know nothing regarding it. I shed many tears, saying: 'Thou mayest destroy and annihilate me, O my God, but I will not leave Thee until Thou hast granted me the conversion of these hearts.'"

These same five hearts were shown to her on several occasions. On one occasion our Lord invited her in a special manner to take upon herself the charge of restoring them to His favor and love. "Charge yourself with this burden," were His words to her, "and share in the bitterness of My Heart. Shed tears of sorrow over

the insensibility of these hearts which I chose in order to consecrate them to My love ; or else leave them to be lost, and come and share My delights." "I put aside, however," she says, "all thought of any such consolation, and gave full vent to my tears, regarding myself as charged with these hearts which were on the point of being deprived of love. I prostrated myself frequently before the Sovereign Goodness, and presented to Him those hearts, that they might be filled with His divine love." "But I had to suffer much," she remarks, "before this was accomplished. Hell itself is not more dreadful than a heart deprived of the love of my Beloved."

As our Lord allowed Himself in His infinite condescension to be tempted by the devil, so He would allow Margaret Mary to be assailed by him with the same temptations. Our Lord reminds us by this ineffable mystery of love on His part, that "we have not a High-Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin."* In like manner, perhaps, as He designed Margaret Mary for the work of reparation, He would fit her for this work by giving her through temptation a greater sense of compassion for others. And as it is said of Him, "in that wherein He Himself hath suffered and been

* Heb. iv. 15.

tempted, He is able to succor them also that are tempted,"* perhaps it was His will that through temptation she might also have greater power to help those for whom she was to make reparation.

It was whilst she was watching during the night between Thursday and Friday that our Lord told her that Satan had asked permission to try her, as gold in the furnace, in the crucible of contradictions, humiliations, temptations, and dereliction, and that He had given permission for all temptations but those of impurity. He would never allow him to give her any trouble on that point, as He had never allowed him in the least to attack Him. But as regards all the other temptations she was to be on her guard, especially those of pride, despair, and gluttony, "of which," she says, "I had a greater horror than of death." Our Lord assured her at the same time that He would protect her Himself as an impregnable fortress. Her principal care, He told her, should be to watch over her exterior; the care of her interior He reserved to Himself.

The devil first endeavored to terrify her by his threats. He presented himself to her under the form of a hideous negro, his eyes sparkling like two burning coals. Gnashing his teeth at her, "Accursed that you are," he said, "I will catch

* Heb. ii. 18.

you, and if I once have you in my power I will make you feel what I can do." He made her many other threats of the same kind. "But I did not fear him at all," she says, "so powerfully did I feel myself strengthened from within. It even seemed to me that I should not have feared all the fury of hell with the help of a little crucifix to which my Sovereign Redeemer had attached the power of keeping all the infernal furies at a distance from me. I wore it upon my heart night and day, and received great assistance from it."

The office to which she was appointed at this time—that of assistant in the Infirmary*—gave her many opportunities of suffering, both in consequence of her naturally quick and sensitive character, and also from difference of disposition

* This was the second time that Margaret Mary was placed in this charge under Sister Catherine Augustine Marest. This good and indefatigable Sister expected as much from others as she did herself. But she could not refuse her tribute of admiration to Margaret Mary. She deposed in 1715, "that having been Infirmarian with the servant of God, she was constantly edified by the eagerness she manifested to serve the sick Sisters in all that was most repugnant to nature, and that the Venerable Sister, when sick herself, bore the most acute sufferings with great patience. She thought less of her own pain than of the trouble she gave the Infirmarians, and she was always apprehensive of tiring them."

in others. The devil also would often annoy her by making her fall and break what she was carrying. He would then laugh at her for her clumsiness, and tell her that she would never be fit for anything. He often also plunged her into sadness and dejection, and endeavored at the same time to prevent her discovering her state to the Mother Superior.

The Mother Superior would mortify and humble her severely when any accident of the kind above mentioned happened, and would require her to tell her fault in the Refectory. She cheerfully performed the penance imposed on her, in order to repair by it any breach of poverty she might have caused.

One day, as she was carrying a pan of burning coals, the devil threw her down from the top to the bottom of the stairs. None of the fire was spilled, and she was not at all hurt, whilst those who saw her fall thought that she must have broken her legs.* "I felt," she says, "that my Guardian Angel was supporting me."

Margaret Mary, not satisfied with the numerous opportunities of suffering presented to her, constantly sought for more by voluntary mortification. "My sensitive and proud nature," she says, "furnished me with abundant

* This fact was attested by several of the Sisters of the Community in the depositions made in 1715.

opportunities. My Sovereign Master would **not** allow me to lose any occasion, and when He wished anything of me, He pressed me so strongly that I was obliged to yield. My resistance only made me suffer more."

She mentions in particular an instance of a heroic victory gained over her own natural repugnance in her attendance on the sick. "If I had a thousand bodies, a thousand loves, and a thousand lives," she said to our Lord, "I would sacrifice them all in order to serve Thee." Our Lord, Who is not behindhand in rewarding a hundredfold any sacrifice which is made for Him, rewarded this heroic act by giving her such spiritual consolation that she would gladly have repeated it, she says, every day. He rewarded her still further by the following signal favor. "The following night," she says, "He allowed me for two or three hours to hold my mouth close to the Wound of His Sacred Heart." "It would be very difficult for me," she remarks, "to express what I then felt, or what marvellous effects this grace produced in my soul. What I have said is enough to make known the great mercies of my God."

Our Lord would **not**, however, lessen her natural sensibility, that she might be reminded of that repugnance which He had condescended to feel in His Agony in the Garden. He would also allow her sometimes even to fail, in order

that she might learn to have a greater distrust of herself, and to rely with greater confidence on Him. "It was then," she says, "that this Sovereign Good of my soul came to my assistance, and, like a loving Father, held out to me the arms of His love, saying to me: 'You know then, now, that you can do nothing without Me?'"

On another occasion, also, she overcame her natural delicacy in a similar manner. Our Lord hereupon said to her: "It is very good of you to do this." "I do it, my Divine Master," she replied to Him, "in order to please Thee, and to gain Thy Divine Heart, and I hope Thou wilt not refuse It me. But what hast Thou not done, my adorable Redeemer, to gain the hearts of men, and yet they refuse them to Thee, and often drive Thee from them." "It is true, My Daughter," He replied, "that My love has made Me sacrifice Myself for them and that they make Me no return, but I wish you to supply, by the merits of My Sacred Heart, for their ingratitude."

It was now that our Lord distinctly made known to her His wish that she should, in the character of victim, satisfy His offended justice. "I wish to give you My Heart," He said to her, "but first you must make yourself a victim of immolation, to turn aside by your intervention the chastisements which the divine justice of My

Father is ready to inflict in His anger on a Religious Community."

This Community, which would seem to be her own, was shown to her with the particular defects which had irritated God against it, and she was told also what she was to suffer in order to appease His wrath. "As this was represented to me," she says, "I shuddered through and through, and I had not the courage to make the sacrifice of myself." She replied that, not being at her own disposal, she could not do it without the consent of obedience. She shrunk, however, from speaking to her Mother Superior, so great was the dread she felt at the thought of the sacrifice she was called on to make. She was pursued, meanwhile, unceasingly by the interior reproaches of our Lord, and she could find no rest. She shed many tears, and at length felt herself obliged to mention all to her Mother Superior. Margaret Mary was ordered by her to make an entire sacrifice of herself, as our Lord required of her; but she continued still to resist. "At last," as she describes the circumstances herself, "on the eve of the Presentation (of the Blessed Virgin), the divine justice appeared to me armed in such terrors that I was quite out of myself."

She was told, like St. Paul, that it was hard for her to resist the divine power; and that, since she had made such resistance, in order

to avoid the humiliation proposed to her, our Lord would increase it twofold. She had been asked to make a sacrifice in secret, but now it should be public, and in a manner and at a time which would be incomprehensible to human reason, and under circumstances so humiliating that it would be a subject of confusion to her for the rest of her life. "I very soon," she says, "experienced the effects of these words. I never was in such a state. The following will give some slight idea of it."

She then describes the occurrence. It was on the eve of the Presentation of our Lady, the 20th November, 1677. At the end of the evening prayer she felt unable to leave with the rest of the Community, and remained until the signal for supper, shedding tears and overwhelmed with grief. She went to take her collation with the Community, and dragged herself, as it were, by main force to the Refectory. She here felt strongly urged to make the sacrifice of herself aloud, in the manner she understood our Lord to wish it of her. With this view she left the Refectory (the Mother Superior happening at the time to be unwell), in order to obtain permission to do so. She felt, however, almost deprived of all power of motion, and seemed, as she describes it herself, like one whose hands and feet were tied, with nothing left free to her but her tears, which she shed in abundance.

"I felt," she says, "like the greatest criminal dragged to the place of punishment. I beheld the sanctity of God armed with the bolts of His just anger, and ready to hurl them to destroy me. It seemed as though I saw hell opened to swallow me up. I felt burning with a devouring fire, even to the marrow of my bones. My whole body trembled. The only words I could utter were: 'Have mercy on me, O God, according to the greatness of Thy mercies.'"

Plunged in this mysterious state of suffering, it was nearly eight o'clock before she could reach the room of the Mother Superior, and she was then conducted to it by a Sister, who had found her on the way. The Mother Superior was greatly surprised to see her in this condition, and Margaret Mary was unable to explain to her the cause of it. What added to her pain was that she thought that every one must know what was passing within her.

Knowing the power of obedience over her, the Mother Superior ordered her to tell the cause of her trouble. Margaret Mary, upon this, at once declared to her the sacrifice which our Lord wished her to make of herself in the presence of the Community, and the reason for which He demanded it. "This," she says in her narrative, "I will not express more particularly, for fear of wounding holy charity, and

with it the Heart of Jesus Christ, in which this virtue takes its rise."

What it was precisely that our Lord required of her Margaret Mary does not explain more definitely ; but she did and said, she tell us, all that He desired of her.

Very different judgments were naturally formed of her conduct in this matter. It would have appeared mysterious, of course, to all, but those hearts which were most closely united with the Sacred Heart of our Lord would have been most privileged to read the mystery aright. "But I leave all this," she says, "to the mercy of my God. What I can affirm is that I never suffered so much." "It seems to me," she adds, "that if all the sufferings which I had endured up to that time, and all those which I have endured since, were put together and were to continue to my death, they would not bear any comparison with what I endured during that night." Our Lord would allow her to have some experience of the night of ignominy which He passed before His Passion. She was dragged from one side to another to different parts of the house, amidst a scene of frightful confusion.

The night thus passed, as Margaret Mary describes it, in torments known only to God, and without any repose till about the time of Mass. As she assisted at it, she seemed to

hear the following words: "At length peace is restored, and My sanctity of justice is satisfied by the sacrifice you have made Me, in order to honor that which I made at the moment of My Incarnation in the womb of My Mother. I wish to join the merit of your sacrifice to Mine, and to apply it in favor of charity in the manner I have declared to you. Henceforth you must no longer claim anything for yourself in all that you do or suffer—either by way of merit, or in satisfaction, or in any other way, but all must be sacrificed to My good pleasure in favor of charity. You must therefore, in imitation of Me, act and suffer in silence, without any other interest than the glory of God, and the establishment of the reign of My Sacred Heart in the hearts of men, to whom I wish to manifest It by your means."

This communication was made to her after Holy Communion. Our Lord would, however, still leave her in her state of suffering. But in the midst of it she enjoyed great peace, for she received all, as she tells us, from His hand, and He instructed her that she should be ready to suffer in this manner to the day of judgment, should such be the will of God. She appeared to herself an object of contradiction, and a sink, as she expresses it, of contempt and humiliation. She could neither eat nor sleep. "My most pleasing occupation was," she says, "to

remain prostrate before my God, Whose sovereign greatness kept me, as it were, annihilated in the lowest depth of my misery. I constantly wept and groaned, to beg mercy of Him, and to turn aside His just anger."

In the midst of these interior sufferings she would not be dispensed from any part of her work, or from the observance of any of her Rules. She felt, as she tells us, as though the sovereign power of our Lord dragged her as a criminal from one place of punishment to another. She met with torture everywhere, and she felt so absorbed and swallowed up in suffering that she had, as it were, no spirit or life, except to see and feel her afflictions and pains. "All this, however," she says, "caused me no uneasiness or annoyance."

As it was observed that she did not eat, the Mother Superior, or, more probably, perhaps, a Sister who acted in her place, and her Confessor, ordered her to eat whatever was set before her at table. This seemed to her beyond her power. Our Lord, however, she says, gave her strength to obey, and she did as she was told, but after each repast she was seized with vomiting. This continued a long time, and her stomach was so weakened by it that the same effect still remained even after she had been dispensed from this order, and told that she might take what she could. "From this time,"

she says, "eating became to me a torment. I went to the Refectory as to a place of punishment, to which I had been condemned for my sins. I endeavored to eat indifferently all that was presented to me, but I could not prevent myself always taking the least, and what was most in conformity with my poverty and nothingness. It was represented to me that bread and water was sufficient for me, and that all else was superfluous."

Her sufferings, meanwhile, continued to increase. She was supposed to be possessed or obsessed by the devil. Some threw holy water upon her, and made the sign of the Cross, to drive away the evil spirit. "But He by Whom I felt myself possessed," she remarks, with simplicity, "far from fleeing away, drew me more powerfully to Himself, saying, 'I love holy water, and I have so great an affection for the Cross, that I cannot refrain from uniting Myself closely with souls who bear it as I did, and for the love of Me.'" "These words," she says, "enkindled so strongly in my heart the desire of suffering, that all that I endured seemed to me but as a drop of water, which rather increased than allayed my burning thirst." The devil at the same time assaulted her with great fury. "I should have yielded a thousand times," she says, "had I not felt an extraordinary power within me, supporting me, and combating for me."

The Mother Superior at length ordered her to go to Holy Communion, and to beg of our Lord by obedience to restore her to her former state. "I presented myself then to Him," she says, "as a victim of immolation. 'Yes, My Daughter,' He said to me, 'I come to you as Sovereign Sacrificer. I will give you fresh vigor, but it shall be to make you a victim to new sufferings.'" "I felt myself changed," she says, "on a sudden, and as a slave who has just recovered her liberty." But her trouble was soon renewed, for she was told by those about her that it was the devil who was the author of all that passed within her, and that he would destroy her by his illusions if she did not take care.

This was a terrible blow to her, for she had all her life felt a great fear of being deceived, or deceiving others. She did all she could to withdraw herself from the power of the Sovereign Spirit Who acted within her, but all her efforts were in vain. "He had taken such possession of all my powers," she says, "that I seemed as though I were in an abyss, and the more I endeavored to escape, the deeper I was plunged in it." Our Lord calmed her fears, saying to her, "What have you to fear in the arms of the Almighty? Could He possibly allow you to perish, or abandon you to your enemies? I have been your Father, your Master, and your Director from your tenderest infancy. I have given

you constant proofs of the tenderness of My Heart, and I have even given It you as your place of abode. Tell Me what stronger proof you would desire of My love, and I will give it you. But why will you combat against Me, Who am alone your true and only friend?" "These reproaches," she says, "caused me great confusion, and I resolved no longer to take any part in the trials they would make of the Spirit Who conducted me, contenting myself with accepting humbly and from my heart whatever might be required of me."

"My Lord and my God!" here exclaims Margaret Mary, "Who alone knowest the pain I suffer in writing all this, and the violence I am obliged to do myself in order to surmount the repugnance and confusion which I feel, grant me the grace to die rather than to say anything but what comes from the truth of Thy Spirit, and will give Thee glory and myself confusion. Grant for mercy's sake, O my Sovereign Good, that this writing may never be seen by any one but the person by whom Thou wouldst have it examined, in order that it may not prevent my remaining buried in eternal contempt and oblivion on the part of creatures. Grant Thy poor slave, O my God, this consolation." As she made this request, she heard, she tells us, the following reply: "Leave everything to My good pleasure, and allow Me to accomplish My de-

signs without interfering with anything. I will have a care of all."

"I will continue then, O my God, by obedience," she replies, "without any other thought than that of pleasing Thee by this kind of martyrdom, for each word I write appears to me a sacrifice. Mayest Thou be glorified thereby eternally." "It is true," she adds, "that the will of God has appeared clear to me in this, for the reason I am going to mention. For having been always led to love my Sovereign Lord for the love of Himself, not wishing or desiring anything but Himself alone, I have never been attached to His gifts, however great they may have been in my regard. I valued them only because they came from Him. I thought as little as I could about them, in endeavoring to forget everything in order to remember Him alone, out of Whom all else is to me as nothing. When I was required then by obedience to write, it seemed to me that it would be impossible to speak of things so long past. Our Lord, however, has certainly shown me by experience the contrary; and in order to make it more easy for me, He makes me feel in the manner I mentioned regarding each particular subject of which I write. It is this that convinces me that it is His will."



CHAPTER XVI.

1678.

WHILST Margaret Mary was thus suffering in order to satisfy the sanctity of divine justice, and that she might be more perfectly conformed to our Divine Lord in His sufferings, the time prescribed by the Institute as the limit of her worthy Mother Superior's government expired. Mother de Saumaise was to form after her departure a still closer union with Margaret Mary in devotion to the Sacred Heart, as we shall see by her letters, both from Moulins, where she was chosen Mother Superior, and from Dijon.

It may be interesting to notice here a few of the reminiscences left recorded by Mother de Saumaise of her saintly Daughter. "During the space of six years that I knew our Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque," she wrote, after the death of Margaret Mary, to her former Daughters of Paray, "I am able to say that I never remarked that she relaxed for an instant in the resolution she had taken, at the time she consecrated herself to God by her religious profession, to allow Him to reign in her above and before all, and in everything. She never allowed herself to indulge in any gratification either of mind or body.

This fidelity drew down upon her from the Divine Goodness most special graces and favors, which led her to a very great desire of crosses, humiliations, and sufferings ; so that it might be said without exaggeration that never was any one more ambitious of honor and pleasure than she was of these, though whilst she took delight in them she felt them very keenly. ‘The Cross,’ she would say, ‘is my glory ; my way to it is by love. Love reigns supreme over me ; love alone suffices me.’

“The desire which she felt to resemble our Lord Jesus Christ as closely as she could, led her to do and suffer much which was very crucifying to nature with incredible peace, patience, and gentleness. If she received any humiliation, contradiction, or mortification from any one she begged earnestly to be allowed to take disciplines and other penances for them, for she was never better pleased than when she saw herself despised.

“I will say nothing of her exactness in all the practices of religious life, and of her severe and rigorous mortifications, as others have already done so. I will only mention that when she was Mistress of the Children, one of them having an abscess in her foot, in order to overcome the repugnance which she felt at the sight of it, she put her mouth to it and sucked the corrupt matter out of it, and would have continued this

mortification until the wound was healed had she not been forbidden to do so. She did many other acts of mortification no less revolting to nature, and she sought them with ardor when she knew that anything had been done by which God was offended.

“One day as she was at work our Lord made known to her the wants of a certain soul, and asked her if she would make over to Him any good she had done, and any sufferings she might endure, in order to obtain for this soul the grace she required. She offered herself according to His holy will, and a short time afterwards she had a severe illness, and met with a fall which caused her such pains that God alone knows how excruciating they were. She suffered for many others also in the same manner. It gave her incredible joy to be able in this way to satisfy for outrages committed against the Divine Goodness.

“Our Lord was pleased also to make her acquainted with the satisfaction He received from some persons. Thus He once showed her three who were going to Communion, and said to her, ‘I will give them three kisses of peace, love, and confidence.’ She felt inexpressible joy to see the pleasure Jesus Christ took in these holy souls.

“We have seen something of the joy which she felt in meeting with generous and faithful

souls who would not falter in fulfilling the designs of God in their regard, and the holy union she formed with them, as in the case of Father de La Colombière, who on his part entertained a very high esteem for this dear Sister."

Mother de Saumaise here mentions the incident recounted above, connected with the note of advice which Margaret Mary had written to Father de La Colombière when in London. Mother de Saumaise, it will be remembered, had omitted to send it, but afterwards, in consequence of a letter received from Father de La Colombière, had determined to do so, though with an unintentional alteration, to which Margaret Mary had called her attention. "Father de La Colombière," she says, "on receiving this note, told me that it had come most opportunely, and that without it he did not know what he could have done." "There are many other occasions," she adds, "which perhaps it is unnecessary to mention, in which she showed an acquaintance with circumstances which it seemed impossible to discover by human means."

"Having seen," she concludes, "all that has been written regarding this perfect Religious, I can affirm that it has been learned either from the conversation we have had with her during the six years that I have had the honor of being in your Community, or from the letters which have been received from her since, in which she

explains herself more particularly concerning the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and a Vision which she had on the Feast of the Visitation, in the year 1688.

“Persons of merit who were acquainted with our virtuous Sister Margaret Mary, entertained, and still entertain, a high esteem of her. They say that what passed within her came from the good spirit, and declare that the marks were too strong to admit of any doubt, especially her sincere humility.”

Such are the sentiments which Mother de Saumaise entertained of Margaret Mary. Before we have occasion to speak of the Mother Superior who succeeded her, and who was so instrumental in manifesting the truth of the revelations communicated to Margaret Mary, it may be well to consider briefly what was the condition of the Religious Community of Paray-le-Monial at the time she took charge of it.





CHAPTER XVII.

1677—1678.

WHAT was the religious state of the Community of Paray at the time that Margaret Mary suffered, in the manner above described, as victim of the sanctity of divine justice? This inquiry naturally suggests itself both from the very nature of the case, and also in consequence of the highly-wrought picture presented by Monsignor Languet in his *Life of Blessed Margaret Mary*.

It is no easy matter to pass judgment on a Community at the distance of nearly two centuries; but we are in possession of some historical data which may afford, perhaps, sufficient light to enable us to form a tolerably correct estimate of the state of Paray-le-Monial at this time.

We have first the testimony of the Reverend Mother Greyfié as to the state of the Community at the period of her accession as Mother Superior, in 1678, which coincides with the very period in the life of Blessed Margaret Mary we are now considering. Reared as she was at the holy source of Annecy, where she had imbibed

the traditions of the sainted Founders, the Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié, could not have been unacquainted with the spirit of the Institute. The following then are the terms in which she writes, in 1690, to the Mother Lévy Château-morand, at that time the Mother Superior of Paray: "When I entered on the service of your House in 1678," she says, "though your Community was very good, and full of virtue and piety, nevertheless I found sentiments greatly divided regarding that true Spouse of her crucified Saviour, Sister Margaret Mary, in respect of the above-mentioned sacrifice our Lord had demanded of her."

Again, the biographical notices written by the contemporaries of Margaret Mary present, in the lives of some of the Sisters who lived at this period, virtues of a high order. In others, and these a considerable number, we find a life undistinguished perhaps by any special brilliancy, but still closely in keeping with their holy Institute, and therefore irreproachable. As regards those of whom no notice exists, we are possessed of no grounds for forming any judgment concerning them.

The following is the account given by some of the elder Sisters, who had had opportunities of conversing with contemporaries of Blessed Margaret Mary, regarding the night of suffering passed by her before the Feast of the Presenta-

tion of our Blessed Lady. It would appear from it that it was but a small portion of the Community who took part in the scene.

The Mother de Saumaise, they say, on learning from Margaret Mary that our Lord demanded satisfaction to His justice, sent word by the Sister Assistant to the Community, who were assembled in the Choir for Matins, that in order to appease the anger of Almighty God they were to take the discipline. The greater part of the Sisters withdrew to perform this act of reparation, whilst some, suspecting that it was Margaret Mary who had been instrumental in procuring the order to be given, repaired to the Infirmary and there gave full vent to their feelings of discontent. They led her off with them from the Infirmary, treating her as a visionary, and attributing the mysterious state to which the sanctity of divine justice had reduced her to the illusion of her imagination. They had so far, however, returned to a better sense by the following morning, as to be able to celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of our Lady by receiving Holy Communion and by the renewal of their vows.

The overdrawn picture, as it would seem to be, which is presented by Monsignor Languet may be accounted for to some extent by what is stated by some of the Sisters, contemporaries of Blessed Margaret Mary, as we have it on the

authority of some of the elder Sisters, who received it from them.

Monsignor Languet, not at that time Bishop, was appointed Superior of the Monastery of Paray-le-Monial in 1712, and consequently several of the Sisters who had been contemporaries of Blessed Margaret Mary would have been still alive at the time that he made his canonical visitations of the monastery. They declared, as we have it on the authority of some of the elder Sisters, that, in speaking with him, under a feeling of deep grief at having failed to appreciate at once the sanctity of Blessed Margaret Mary, they accused themselves so unmercifully and in such exaggerated terms that the good Superior might easily have been led to form conclusions unfavorable to the whole Community, as it would seem from the tone of his work he has actually done.

We meet again incidentally with a further testimony from the Reverend Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié, in a circular from the Nuns of Paray, dated July 9, 1729, and addressed to the other Houses of the Visitation.

"The most interesting news we can send you," say the Sisters, "is the re-election of our most honored Mother Mary Helena Coing. Her spiritual gifts, her prudence, and her unvarying temper, joined to her rare talents, make her an accomplished Mother Superior, a Mother

according to the Heart of God, and most acceptable to us. You may judge, then, very dear Sisters, whether we hesitated to put ourselves again under her judicious and amiable guidance, having experienced such kindness under her first government.

“We would gladly do what we can to lighten her burden, and perpetuate amongst us what was agreeably remarked by our most honored Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié, that Paray was the Thabor of Superiors, owing to the submission and exact regularity she found in the monastery, which she compared to that of the first Monastery of Annecy, of which she was Professed; adding that she had never seen or governed one which was more conformable to it.”

Finally, a deposition made on occasion of the Process instituted in 1715, supplies us with the following testimony. M. Michon, an inhabitant of Paray, a parliamentary lawyer, deposes “that he has a brother living who has acted for more than twenty-four years as Confessor to the Community of Paray (during the lifetime of Blessed Margaret Mary); that his said brother, the Priest, told him that this was one of the most regular monasteries in the kingdom, and that, amongst others, there was a Sister who lived like a Saint, meaning the Venerable Sister Alacoque.”

The picture presented by these various testi-

monies sets before us the Religious Community of Paray as very good, remarkable for its regularity, and distinguished by striking virtues.

In spite, however, of this regularity which existed in the Community, there is no doubt that there prevailed for some time a diversity of opinion regarding the mysterious favors bestowed upon Blessed Margaret Mary. It could hardly, indeed, have been otherwise. It was necessary that these extraordinary graces should be tested before their divine character could be generally recognized ; and whilst there was as yet an exterior uncertainty regarding them, they could hardly fail to meet with contradiction. And though it is true that the marvellous graces bestowed upon Margaret Mary had an intimate connection with the very soul of her Institute, it is no great reflection upon a Community that they should have failed to detect at once this mysterious and intimate union, especially when their attention was fixed so jealously upon the faithful observance of the letter of the Rule, and when the extraordinary character of the graces seemed at first sight at variance with the acknowledged simplicity of the Institute.

As regards the Mothers Superior who governed the Monastery during the time of Margaret Mary, we find that they studied her conduct and virtues carefully, tried her as prudence required they should do, and eventually

were severally satisfied of the divine character of her mission.

As regards the Community, the great majority entertained a sincere regard for Blessed Margaret Mary, and admired her virtues, even though they hesitated to accept the Devotion she desired so earnestly to establish.

There were, indeed, some among the Sisters who showed themselves less fervent and less charitable. They were severe in their criticisms upon the particular Devotions Margaret Mary sought to introduce, and regarded as illusions the mysterious favors which she received. They advocated the observance of the Rule, but it was at the expense sometimes of humility, meekness, and charity. What was the proportion which these Sisters bore to the rest of the Community?

We may perhaps receive some light on this point from the revelations made to Margaret Mary.

These revelations indeed have commonly something of a mystical character. They appear sometimes to regard the Faithful in general, sometimes to refer to Religious exclusively; often they seem to regard the Visitation alone, and sometimes to refer exclusively to the Community of Paray. Of this last kind appears to be one which we have already spoken of, in which our Blessed Lady made known a

desire she had felt of forming for herself a crown, to be composed of all the Sisters of the Community. She desired to present herself, thus adorned, on the Feast of her Assumption before the Blessed Trinity. But as she quitted the earth there remained but fifteen to form her crown; of these five were chosen as Spouses of her Son. The rest were held back by the ties which attached them to the earth. Five of the latter number were shown on another occasion to Margaret Mary as "those which this loving Heart was ready to reject." Margaret Mary intercedes for them. "I will not quit Thee," she says, "until Thou hast granted me the conversion of those hearts." "Charge yourself with this burden," is the answer she receives, "and share in the bitterness of My Heart." She entreated earnestly that they might be filled with His divine love; "but I had to suffer much," she says, "before this was accomplished." We have seen what some of those sufferings were in what occurred on the eve of the Presentation.

The comparatively few Sisters (perhaps the five thus indicated) who took part in the scene, evidently understood nothing of the real nature of the mysterious sufferings of Margaret Mary. Some suggested remedies; others had recourse to holy water. Their blindness, from whatever cause it proceeded, appeared to be instrumental,

in the hands of Almighty God, to the increase of the sufferings of His self-devoted victim.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that it was of these that our Lord complained to Blessed Margaret Mary under the figure of the five hearts whom He was on the point of rejecting, and for whom He would have her make herself responsible.

Finally, on the following morning, the Feast of the Presentation, she is assured by our Lord after Holy Communion: "Peace is made, and My sanctity of justice is satisfied." And thus the five hearts on the point of being rejected appear to have been restored to His favor.

The testimonies, then, to which we have referred would seem to favor the conclusion that during the lifetime of Blessed Margaret Mary the Community of Paray was in general very good, that its regularity was even remarkable, and that great virtues were practiced in it. Such is the opinion to which we seem to be led by the authority of the Reverend Mother Greyfié, the expressions of contemporaries, and the depositions adduced in the Process in 1715.

Several of the Sisters, as we have seen, show themselves true Daughters of St. Francis of Sales, and are admitted by our Lord to the number of His Spouses. Many, though falling short of this perfection, are good Religious, and are thought worthy of "forming a crown" for

the Blessed Virgin. Some call forth the complaints and threats of our Lord ; but Margaret Mary offers herself as victim for them, and she is assured that the sanctity of His justice is satisfied.





CHAPTER XVIII.

1678—1679.

THE second three years of Mother de Sau-
maise's Superiority having expired, the Com-
munity of Paray turned to Annecy for her
successor, and obtained from them the object
of their choice, Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié.
Whilst yet an infant, Péronne Rosalie Greyfié
had had the happiness of receiving the blessing
of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. She had been
trained as a child at Annecy, under the Vener-
able Mothers de Chaugy and de Blonay, names
so well known in the annals of the Visitation;
she was there admitted to the holy Habit at the
early age of fifteen, and made her Noviceship
under Mother Mary Margaret Michel, who had
been formed under the immediate care of the
sainted Founder himself. In 1670 she was
chosen Mother Superior of Thonon, and after
returning at the end of six years to Annecy,
where she was appointed Mistress of Novices,
she was now destined, in 1678, to take charge
of the Community of Paray.

The terms in which the Reverend Mother
Philiberte Emmanuel de Monthoux acceded to
the request of the Community, may furnish

us with some idea of the worth of their new Mother Superior. "My dear Sisters," she wrote, "it is a real and heartfelt sacrifice which I make in giving you, at your request, my honored Sister, the Mother deposed of Thonon, at present our worthy Mistress of Novices. She is a valuable subject, and possesses perfectly the spirit of firmness and mildness required for government. She is of a straightforward and sincere character, perfectly humble, and very exact in regular observance. In short, my dear Sisters, had I not as great a regard as I have for the Monastery of Paray, I could not consent to part with a Mother, with whom I am sure you will be greatly pleased." Father de La Colombière, on meeting her in 1679, discovered at once her singular talent for government, and told the Community they possessed in her a most able Mother Superior, and one specially favored with the precious gift of the discernment of spirits.

Possessed of warmth of heart and sound judgment, Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié, as she is described by her Sisters of Paray-le-Monial, joined to a high order of mind, refinement and strength of character. She was disposed to entertain great distrust of all that was extraordinary, and was strongly attached to the peculiar spirit of the Visitation, which is one of simplicity. Hence she appears to have been

specially chosen to place beyond a doubt the divine character of the mysterious and extraordinary graces bestowed upon Margaret Mary.

We possess a valuable memoir written by her, which she sent in 1690, after the death of Margaret Mary, to the Mother Lévy Châteaumorand, at that time Mother Superior of the Monastery of Paray. From this we learn what were the sentiments she entertained regarding Blessed Margaret Mary, and the course which she adopted in her conduct towards her.

Finding, on her first arrival at Paray, that there existed in the Community a diversity of opinion regarding Blessed Margaret Mary, and being naturally a lover of peace, she determined, she tells us, on taking no more notice than she was obliged of the extraordinary favors communicated to her. "I trusted in this a great deal," she says, "to the assurances she made me herself that our Lord would lead me to act according to His holy will in her regard." If anything was done by Margaret Mary which caused annoyance to others, the Mother Greyfié, acting in this spirit, would allow them to express their disapprobation of it, even though the thing had been done by her own order, or with her permission, and she would even blame her herself if the disapprobation happened to be expressed in her presence.

Whilst the prudent Mother Superior thus

tested the virtue of her favored Daughter, our Divine Lord, on His part, instructed the Mother Greyfié herself by a sensible admonition concerning the reality of the mysterious graces He had communicated to her.

Margaret Mary was in the habit, as we have seen, of making an hour's prayer, enjoined her by our Lord Himself, and since known by the name of the "Holy Hour," on the night between Thursday and Friday. She had obtained permission for this from the Reverend Mother de Saumaise, on the occasion of her miraculous restoration to health by the hands of the Blessed Virgin, above mentioned. She spent this hour prostrate upon the ground, her arms stretched out in the form of a cross. The Mother Greyfié required her to change this position when suffering more than usual in health, and to take the position of kneeling, her hands joined or her arms crossed upon her breast. She proceeded indeed so far as to forbid her the hour's prayer altogether. Margaret Mary obeyed the orders given her. "But often during the time," says the Mother Greyfié, "she came to me full of apprehension, telling me that it seemed to her that our Lord was angry with me for the forbiddance, and that she was afraid He would exact satisfaction for it in a manner that I should be very sorry for and feel deeply." The Mother Greyfié still remained inflexible, till the

sudden death, on the 14th of October, 1678, at the early age of twenty-one, of Sister Mary Elizabeth Carré, on whom she had built her greatest hopes, made her think more seriously on the matter. "I lost no time," is her own account, "in restoring the hour of prayer to your precious departed Sister Margaret Mary, for I was strongly possessed by the thought that this was the punishment with which she had threatened me on the part of our Lord."

It was, perhaps, in consequence of the assurance she had thus received from our Lord Himself of the truth of His communications to Margaret Mary, that the Mother Greyfié consented without hesitation to take part in the execution of a spiritual document which Margaret Mary was required by Him about this time to draw up. Margaret Mary had already, as we have seen, in compliance with His demand, made an entire surrender of herself by the sacrifice of her whole being to His Sacred Heart in favor of charity. He now required her to do the same in writing. She was ordered by our Lord to ask her Mother Superior to draw up this mysterious will. He promised to bestow upon her a solid recompense in return. In case of her refusal, Margaret Mary was to address herself to Father de La Colombière, whose return from England was brought about by an unexpected course of events, and who visited

Paray early in the following year, 1679. The Mother Greyfié, however, consented to draw up the deed herself. The following are the terms of this mystical document :—

“May Jesus ever live in the heart of His Spouse, Sister Margaret Mary, for whom, in virtue of the power which God gives me over her, I offer, dedicate, and consecrate, purely and inviolably, to the Sacred Heart of the Adorable Jesus, all the good which she may do during her life, and whatever may be done for her after her death, in order that the will of this Divine Heart may dispose of it at His good pleasure, and in favor of whomsoever He may please, whether living or dead,—Sister Margaret Mary protesting that she voluntarily strips herself in general of all excepting the will to be forever united to the Divine Heart of her Jesus, and to love Him purely for the love of Himself. In testimony whereof she and I sign this writing, the last day of December, 1678.

“Sister Péronne Rosalie Greyfié, Mother Superior, for whose conversion, together with the grace of final penitence, Sister Margaret Mary will pray to the Divine and Adorable Heart.”

Margaret Mary then presented this mysterious will, thus executed, to our Divine Lord. He promised to make over to her, in return for the surrender which she had made of herself, the riches of His Sacred Heart. “I presented it,”

she says, "to the only Love of my soul. He testified His great pleasure at receiving it, and told me that He would dispose of it according to His designs, and in favor of whomsoever He pleased. But, since the love of Him had stripped me of all, He would have me possess no other riches than those of His Sacred Heart."

In signing this donation of herself, Margaret Mary would imitate her sainted Foundress, and engraved the holy name of Jesus with a penknife upon her heart. Our Lord then gave her a donation of the treasures of His Sacred Heart. This, she tells us, she wrote as follows, at His dictation, in her own blood :—

"I make you heiress of My Heart and of all Its treasures for time and eternity, allowing you to use them according to your desire, and I promise you that you shall only fail to receive assistance when My Heart shall want power to give it you. You shall be forever Its beloved Disciple, the sport of Its good pleasure, and the victim of Its wishes. It shall be the sole delight of all your desires ; It will repair and supply for your defects, and discharge your obligations for you."

Our Lord afterwards told her that He would recompense a hundredfold all the good that should be done her as if done to Himself, and that He would bestow upon the person who had drawn up the will the same recompense He had

bestowed upon St. Clare of Montefalcone ; and that He would, to that end, add to her actions the infinite merits of His own, and enable her, by the love of His Sacred Heart, to merit the same crown. The joy which Margaret Mary felt at hearing this shows how true a love she entertained for our Lord, for the treatment she received from her Mother Superior had nothing to recommend it on the ground of human nature. "This gave me great consolation," she observes, "for I loved her greatly, because she fed my soul with the delightful bread of mortification and humiliation." "God has done me this favor," she adds, "that I have never been without it." Her whole life, indeed, was passed in sufferings both of body and soul, nor would our Lord allow her to find any consolation but in Himself. "I have always regarded this," she says, "as one of the greatest favors which my God has done me, that He has never deprived me of the precious treasure of the Cross, in spite of the bad use I have made of it." The very thought of it leads her to burst forth into praises of it. "I could have wished," she says, "to melt with love and gratitude towards my Liberator." "It gives me such pleasure," she concludes, "to speak of the happiness of suffering, that it seems to me I could write whole volumes about it without thinking I had said enough."

In spite of the assurances which our Lord gave her Himself of the truth of His communications to her, the low opinion which she entertained of herself made Margaret Mary constantly fearful lest she might be deceived, and lest the favors she received were illusions of the devil. On receiving the slightest confirmation in these sentiments, she was ready to give credence to it, thinking that she was worthy of nothing else but to be the sport of the evil spirit. "These apprehensions on her part," writes the Mother Greyfié, "inspired me with the same." But she was reassured by a conversation she had with the Reverend Father de La Colombière,* to whom she spoke on the subject. He told her that he had no hesitation in believing that what took place with regard to Margaret Mary was truly a grace from God. "But what matters it," he said to her, "even though it were an illusion of the devil, provided it produce in her the same effect as would be produced by the grace of our Lord?" "But there is no appearance," he added, "of the devil having any part in it, for in that case, in wishing to deceive her, he would be deceiving himself; for humility, simplicity, and exact obedience and mortification, are not the fruits of the spirit

* This was on occasion of a passing visit he paid to Paray on his way to Lyons, after his return from England in 1679.

of darkness." "Upon this advice," says the Mother Greyfié, "I felt greatly reassured, because, whatever course I took, I always found Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque faithful in the practice of those virtues, and in the exact observance of her holy duties."

Father de La Colombière, writing shortly after this from Lyons, bears similar testimony to the virtues he had witnessed himself in Margaret Mary. "As I passed through Paray," he writes, on the 23d of March, 1679, to Mother de Sau-maise, "I was able to see Sister Alacoque but once, but I derived great consolation from the visit. I found her, as usual, extremely humble and submissive, with a great love of the Cross and of humiliation. These are the marks of the good spirit by which she is led; they are such as have never deceived any one."





CHAPTER XIX.

1679.

THE visit of Father de La Colombière to Paray was most seasonable for Margaret Mary, for she was suffering greatly at the time from those temptations on the part of the devil of which she had been forewarned by our Lord. At one time he tempted her to despair. He represented to her that it was useless for her to entertain any hope of Heaven, void as she was of all love of God, and that she would be deprived of Him for all eternity. "This made me," she says, "shed floods of tears." At other times he attacked her with vainglory, and also, as she expresses it, with "that abominable temptation of gluttony." "He made me feel," she says, "a ravenous hunger. He presented to my imagination whatever was most calculated to gratify the taste, and this during the time of my spiritual exercises. This was a terrible torture to me." This hunger continued until she entered the Refectory; the moment she entered it she felt at once so great a disgust for food that she was obliged to use great violence with herself to take any. On leaving the Refectory her hunger returned more violently than before.

“My Mother Superior,” she says, “from whom I concealed nothing that passed within me, ordered me to come and ask for something to eat whenever I felt a violent attack of hunger. I did so with extreme repugnance, in consequence of the great confusion I felt in so doing. But instead of sending me to take something to eat she mortified and humbled me greatly, telling me to reserve my hunger, and that I might satisfy it when the rest of the Community went to the Refectory.” “Upon this,” she says, “I remained at peace in my suffering”

Margaret Mary's principal source of affliction in these temptations was the fear she had of offending God. In her distress, besides the strength she obtained before the Blessed Sacrament, she found great relief in opening her heart to her Mother Superior. The instructions she received on these occasions from the Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié give us an insight into the interior trials with which our Lord visited her. Many of these instructions have been preserved to us from the fact that the Mother Greyfié being often occupied at the time that Margaret Mary wished to speak to her, she was required by her Mother Superior to put her difficulties in writing and received a reply to them also in writing.

“I beg of Jesus Christ, our Almighty Lord and Saviour,” writes the Mother Greyfié on one

occasion, "to command the tempest within you to cease, and I say to you in His name: Be at peace. Your soul is the portion of our Lord, and He is the portion of your soul. You will love Him in spite of your enemies in eternity, by the eternal enjoyment of Him—and in time, by suffering for the love of Him whensoever He may permit it. Eat what you wish with the rest of the Community at the ordinary time of meals; at other times endure your hunger patiently. Humble yourself before God at the thought of your temptations. Hope firmly in His grace and assistance, and let your enemy clamor as much as he pleases. Remain in peace. Blessed be God."

"All that I can say to you, my dear child," she writes on another occasion, "respecting the state of mind of which you have spoken to me as the cause of your suffering, is that you complain, as I may say, of being too well off. I should esteem it a great grace if God allowed me to suffer as you do. It is, as I have already told you, to think but ill of the Divine Goodness to allow yourself the thought that He will permit a soul to be deprived forever of His love which desires to love Him both in time and eternity. He has never done so, and will never do it. If, whilst He favors you with an extraordinary sense of His divine attributes, He allows you at the same time to see something of your

unworthiness, and of that abyss of evil which your sins deserve, you are not to abuse this knowledge. It is given you in order that you may know the greatness of our Lord's divine mercy, Who sets His merits against your demerits. You should therefore constantly repeat: 'I will sing forever the mercies of our Lord, for His goodness endureth forever.' Something, however, is due from us during this life to His justice; we must practice patience, humility, and submission, under any pains or sufferings which He may send us. Bear your sufferings in this spirit. Esteem and cherish them; for great Saints have endured them. Receive them then with thankfulness, peace, meekness, and humility. It would be a very happy thing for you, did they in a manner so annihilate you that you might lose all thought of yourself. Blessed be God."

Our Blessed Lord provided Margaret Mary with a special means of consolation in her sufferings by assigning her a chosen Guardian Angel, who was to accompany her everywhere, and assist her wherever she required his help against her enemy. "This favor," she says, "gave me such strength that it seemed to me I had no longer anything to fear, for this faithful guardian of my soul assisted me with such love that he freed me from all my pains." She was allowed to see him only when our Lord with-

drew His sensible presence from her in order to plunge her in the rigorous pains of His sanctity of justice. It was then especially that this Angel consoled her and conversed familiarly with her.

He told her one day who he was. "I am one," he said, "of those who stand nearest the throne of the Divine Majesty, and participate most fully in the ardors of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ." "My design," he added, "is to communicate them to you as far as you are able to receive them."

He gave her many counsels and admonitions. When our Lord manifested His divine presence she no longer saw him. He prostrated himself, he said, at this time to render homage to the infinite greatness of God thus humbled to her littleness. "I found him always ready," she remarks, "to assist me in my necessities. He never refused me anything I asked of him."

In the Retreat also which Margaret Mary had made this year, our Lord had strengthened her beforehand to bear these sufferings which He told her would be coming upon her. "As I was complaining," she says in the notes which she has left of this Retreat, "that He gave me consolations in too great abundance, for I did not feel capable of bearing them, He told me that it was to strengthen me in what I had to undergo. 'Eat and drink at the table of My

delights,' He said to me, 'to refresh yourself, in order that you may advance courageously, for you will have a long and rugged way to go, and you will often have need to take breath and rest in My Heart, which shall always be open to you.'"

He told her she was to appease His anger against sinners, and move His mercy to pardon them; and that she was not to make any resistance to the arrangements He should make for her by obedience; "For I wish you," He said, "to serve Me as an instrument to draw hearts to My love." "Never forget your nothingness," He added, "and that you are the victim of My Heart, and should be always disposed to be sacrificed for charity. But, as I have promised you, you shall possess in exchange the treasures of My Heart, and I permit you to dispose of them at will in favor of such as are well disposed. Do not be sparing with them, for they are infinite." He told her she could not please Him better than by a constant fidelity to her Rule. "The Religious," He said, "deceives himself and separates himself from Me, who thinks to find Me by any other way than that of an exact observance of his Rules."

She was to abandon herself wholly to Him without any thought or care of herself. He would reward or punish all that should be done to her. He promised to think of those who

should have confidence in her prayers, in order that she might occupy herself wholly with His love.

“I have a rough and heavy cross,” He said, “to put upon your weak shoulders, but I am powerful enough to support it. I will not permit Satan to tempt you with any but the three kinds of temptations with which he had the boldness to attack Me. But fear nothing, trust in Me ; I am your protector and guarantee. I have established My reign of peace in your soul, so that no one shall be able to trouble it, and that of My love in your heart. It will give you a joy that no one will be able to take from you.”





CHAPTER XX.

1678—1681.

IT may be interesting to notice briefly some of the records which Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié has left in her memoir of her personal recollections of Blessed Margaret Mary, especially in connection with the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

“You know, my honored Sister,” she writes to the Mother Lévy Châteaumorand, in 1690, “that the Adorable Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ was the object of her great and heartfelt devotion from the time that our Lord first conferred upon her the grace of discovering to her His Heart in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, as may be seen in the book of Retreats of the Reverend Father de La Colombière.* Although he does not speak of her by name, we know very well that it was from her that he learned what he there mentions, and the

* This book, which contains a record by Father de La Colombière of the graces he received during his spiritual Retreats, was published after his death, and was mainly instrumental in making the Devotion to the Sacred Heart more generally known.

knowledge thus obtained of her cost her no little on the score of humility.

"I remember that the first time I had the happiness of conversing with this dear Sister, she appeared to me to have a strong and ardent desire to discover some means of making this adorable Heart known, loved, and adored, if possible, by the whole world. She was held back, on the other hand, by the low opinion she entertained of herself, and which increased every day. She believed sincerely that it was enough for her to take part in the work to spoil all, and to give a distaste for the Devotion which she had so much at heart, and for the establishment of which she would willingly have given a thousand lives."

It will be remembered that in 1674, on the occasion of our Divine Lord first discovering to Margaret Mary the ineffable secrets of His Sacred Heart, and communicating to her some sparks of Its divine fire, the reality of this mysterious Vision was attested by a pain in her side which was to last, as our Lord assured her, as long as she lived. She was to find relief from it only by bleeding, and this also was to prove to her a source of humiliation.

Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié refers as follows to the circumstance, and records at the same time the verification of the prophecy:—

"God had sent her," she writes, "a pain in

the side, which she endured in honor of the Sacred Wound of our Lord. He told her one day that she should find no relief in any remedy except bleeding; and in order that she might make no difficulty in partaking of this relief, He promised to make it meritorious to her provided that in receiving it she would call to mind the Blood and Water which came forth upon the Cross from the Wound of His Sacred Side. I have seen her bear this pain in silence, without asking to be bled, for both our Sisters and myself felt a repugnance to it, as it was necessary to have recourse to it so often. It was objected to as being a remedy rather suggested by her fancy than suited to her ailment. She had frequent opportunities, in consequence, of suffering in silence and in secret, between God and herself. I resolved on one occasion not to allow her to be bled. Several other remedies were applied, but they served only to increase the pain. She was at last in such a condition that she vomited everything that she took. She refused nothing that was given her for two or three days, and never complained of the wretched state to which she was reduced in consequence of not being allowed to be bled. When I spoke of it to her, 'I know, my Mother,' she said to me, 'that this is the only remedy that can relieve me, but I do not desire it unless your charity wishes it, for my Jesus makes you

wish all that He wishes for me. I am glad to suffer as long as He pleases.'

"The malady having at last reduced her to such a condition that she could hardly breathe or speak, and the vomitings having brought her to a state of great weakness, I had her taken to the Infirmary, and no sooner was a little blood taken from her than she began to breathe freely, recovered her power of speech, and felt such vigor, that, as soon as her arm was bound up, she asked me to allow her to join the regular exercises of the Community.

"From a desire to spare her the little ordinary mortifications which this remedy brought upon her, I sent Sister Catherine Augustine Marest occasionally to bleed her in her cell. But our Lord, Who did not wish that she should have this alleviation, permitted that one day when I had used this precaution she fainted during the Holy Mass, and every one guessed at once what was the cause."

In order to gratify her desire of suffering like Him, our Lord sent Margaret Mary, at this time, so burning a thirst that she could not quench it, whatever quantity of water she took. To mortify herself, however, still more, she would drink nothing from the Thursday evening till the following Saturday.* "She continued this

* This was observed by some of the Sisters, who

practice so long," says the Mother Greyfié, "that I thought myself obliged to forbid it her, and I gave her an obedience to drink three or four times between meals every day." "And this," she remarks, "she observed exactly." In her desire, however, still to join mortification with obedience, she would drink the water in which the dishes had been washed. She received, however, a severe rebuke from the Mother Superior, who reminded her of the words of their holy Founder, that "true obedience obeys not only the command, but also the intention of the Superior."

It would seem that this great desire of mortifying her thirst is to be referred to the following incident, mentioned by Margaret Mary herself in the narrative of her life. "One time," she says, "my Sovereign gave me to understand that He wished to withdraw me into solitude, not into that of the desert whither He Himself had retired, but into that of His Sacred Heart." Here, He said, He would allow her to enjoy most familiar converse with Him, and give her fresh instructions regarding His will, and new strength to accomplish it. "He asked me," she says, "in order to honor His fast in the desert, to fast for fifty days on bread and water. But obedience not having given me permission noticed at the end of the meals that the cups of wine and water set before her remained untouched.

for this, in order that I might not be singular, He told me that it would be equally pleasing to Him if I passed fifty days without drinking, in order to honor the burning thirst which He had suffered on the tree of the Cross, and that which His Sacred Heart had continually endured for the salvation of sinners. I was allowed to practice this penance, which seemed to me more severe than the other, in consequence of the thirst with which I was continually tormented, and which made it necessary for me to drink frequently large glasses of water in order to relieve it."

Margaret Mary had engraved, as we have seen, at the beginning of the year 1679, as the signature of that mystical will by which she had made over to our Lord all her spiritual goods, His holy name upon her heart. The characters becoming effaced a little before the time of her annual Retreat, the ingenuity of her love suggested to her to renew the impression by the aid of a lighted taper. She succeeded even beyond her expectations, so that, on the eve of entering her Retreat, she felt herself obliged to acquaint the Mother Superior with the serious nature of the wounds she had inflicted on herself. The Mother Greyfié told her that she would have some remedy applied, for fear of their being attended with dangerous consequences. Margaret Mary alarmed

at this announcement, made her complaints to our Lord, and begged of Him to cure her Himself and to save her from the confusion.

“Our Lord was touched,” she says, “at the pain I felt at the thought of this being known, and promised me that on the morrow I should be healed.” She was so in fact ; but before she had been able to mention it to the Mother Superior, the Sister Mary Magdalen des Escures was sent to her, bearing a note, in which it was stated that it was to her that the Mother Superior wished her to show her wounds. Margaret Mary thought she might be dispensed from this obedience until she could speak with the Mother Superior, which she lost no time in doing. The Mother Greyfié reproved her for her disobedience, and deprived her of Holy Communion ; “which was for me,” she remarks, “the severest pain that I could suffer in this life.” She ordered her, also, to show the Sister the injury she had inflicted on herself. The Sister found the wounds healed, though the scars were still to be seen tracing the holy name of JESUS in large characters, as the Sister describes it, such as are stamped with moulds on large books.* “But nothing could be compared,” says Margaret Mary, “to the grief I felt

* Deposition of Sister Péronne Rosalie de Farges at the Process of 1715. She had learned these particulars from Sister Mary Magdalen des Escures.

at having displeased my Sovereign Master." Our Lord punished her severely for this reluctance in point of obedience, and kept her, as she describes it, under His sacred feet for about five days. "At length," she says, "after having made me feel this pain, He dried up my tears Himself, and restored life to my soul during the last days of my Retreat." Our Lord told her, however, that, in punishment of her fault, the traces of His holy name, which she had recently made at so dear a cost, should be effaced, and that the first marks also—which had up to that time been clearly visible—should also disappear.* "In fine," she remarks, "I may say that I made a Retreat of sorrow."

Margaret Mary met at this time with a serious accident, the details of which are given as follows by the Mother Greyfié, in her memoir:—

"I remember," she writes, "that one day, as she was engaged in drawing water, the bucket she had just filled slipped from her hands, and, as it fell back into the well, the iron handle of the windlass struck her with such force in the face that it broke away, together with the teeth, a portion of the gums, about the size and thick-

* After the death of Blessed Margaret Mary, some of the Sisters, and among them Sister Mary Magdalen des Escures, were desirous of seeing whether the holy name of JESUS was still visible upon her heart, but not a trace of it was to be seen.

ness of half a finger. The only notice she took of it was to ask one of the children, whose Mistress she then was, to cut off the piece of flesh, which still adhered by one end. The children, however, terrified at seeing her in such a condition, would not touch it. She accordingly cut it off, as well as she could herself, with the help of her scissors. But the wound in her mouth gave her great pain as often as she was obliged to take any nourishment. Besides, the blow caused her a pain in the temples—which after any meal became almost unbearable—like a very violent toothache. The only relief she applied was to quit recreation, with permission, and take a few turns in the garden until the pain subsided, and then she would again join the rest. She suffered all these pains without a complaint, and without even asking for relief, always following the ordinary exercises of the Community, unless obliged by her ailments to do otherwise. Nor even then did she ask; it was necessary to think of it for her.”

Amidst the graces with which our Lord favored Margaret Mary, she was constantly tormented with the apprehension lest she might be the victim of some illusion. In order, therefore, to calm this apprehension, our Lord gave her, she tells us, some marks by which she might be assured that these graces truly came from Him.

“He taught me first,” she says, “that His special graces would always be accompanied by some humiliations, contradictions, or contempt on the part of creatures ; secondly, that after having received any of these divine communications, of which my soul is so unworthy, I should feel plunged in an abyss of self-annihilation and interior confusion, which would make me feel as much sorrow at the sight of my unworthiness as I should have experienced consolation at the liberality of my Divine Saviour, thus checking all vain satisfaction and every feeling of self-esteem. That the graces and communications which I received, whether for myself or others, would never produce the least sentiment of contempt for any one whatever, and that, whatever knowledge they gave me of the interior of others, I should not esteem them the less, however great their miseries might appear to me, but that it would lead me only to sentiments of compassion, and to pray more earnestly for them. That all these graces, however extraordinary they might be, would never hinder me from observing my Rules and obeying blindly.” “For my Divine Saviour gave me to understand,” she says, “that He designed that they should be so dependent on obedience that were I to swerve from it ever so little He would withdraw from me with all His favors. Finally, that this spirit which led me, and which reigns

within me with such dominion, would lead me to five things:—

1. "To entertain an extreme love for my Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. "To obey perfectly the example of my Lord Jesus Christ.

3. "To suffer unceasingly for the love of Jesus Christ.

4. "To wish to suffer, if possible, without its being perceived that I suffer.

5. "To have an insatiable thirst for Holy Communion, and for being before the Blessed Sacrament."

"It seems to me," she adds, "that all these graces have hitherto produced in me all these great effects. As for all else, I see more clearly than the day that a life without the love of Jesus Christ is the greatest possible misery."

Though our Lord Himself would be Margaret Mary's Director, yet He did not wish her to do anything; as we have seen, without the consent of her Superiors. The Mother Greyfié gave her frequent opportunities of practicing this virtue of obedience. The following is an instance, recorded by the Mother Greyfié herself:—

"She was recovering," she says, "from a severe illness, and had not yet left her bed. I do not know whether it was on a Saturday or on the eve of a Feast* that I went to see her. She

* It was on the eve of Corpus Christi, as Margaret

asked permission to get up the next day to assist at Holy Mass. Judging from my manner that I did not think her sufficiently recovered to allow of it, 'My dear Mother,' she said to me, 'if you will it, our Lord will will it also, and will give me strength to do so.'" The Mother Greyfié accordingly gave orders to the Sister Infirmarian to let her get up in the morning in time to assist at Mass. During the evening, Margaret Mary told the Infirmarian that she would very much wish to go fasting, in order to be able to receive Holy Communion. The Sister Infirmarian promised to ask permission of the Mother Superior, but forgot it until the following morning, when, after having allowed her to get up fasting, earlier than the time specified, she left the Infirmary in order to obtain the requisite permission. But as she left the Infirmary by one door, it so happened that

Mary tells us in a letter to Mother de Saumaise. "I must tell you," she writes, "that on the Feast of Corpus Christi our Lord did me the favor to restore me on a sudden from the extreme state of weakness to which I had been reduced. I felt after Holy Communion as strong as I had been before I was confined to my bed, where I had been for a month. I had the happiness afterwards of following the regular order of the Community." The Feast of Corpus Christi fell in the year 1680 on the 20th of June, and from that day to the Feast of the Presentation there are exactly five months.

the Mother Greyfié entered by the other, and was greatly surprised to see Margaret Mary already up and to hear that she was fasting in order to receive Holy Communion. "Without waiting to hear any explanation," says the Mother Greyfié, "I gave her a smart rebuke, exaggerating the fault of her conduct, which I said was the effect of self-will and want of obedience, submission, and simplicity." In conclusion, she told her that she might go to Mass, and communicate, but that, since her self-will had given her sufficient strength for this, she should follow in every point the exercises of the Community for five months, without making use of any remedy during that time, or setting foot in the Infirmary, except to visit and serve the sick whenever the Infirmary required her help. "She received my correction," says the Mother Greyfié, "on her knees, her hands joined, and with a calm and peaceful countenance."

She immediately began to carry out to the letter the orders she had received, and she continued quite well from that time to the Feast of the Presentation of our Lady, which exactly completed the five months. On that day, after the renewal of her vows, all her former maladies returned. "And, in order that she might lose nothing," says the Mother Greyfié, "by the five months during which she had been free from them, our Lord was pleased that they should be

increased twofold, so that the pain in her side, which before obliged her to be bled every fortnight or three weeks, now hardly gave her a week's respite."

Besides the pains which her bodily infirmities and frequent illnesses brought upon her, Margaret Mary had often to endure great anguish of mind as victim to the sanctity of justice for the salvation of others. When our Lord would have her suffer for any soul whom He was on the point of abandoning, He would make her feel all the desolation felt by a reprobate soul at the hour of death. "I never experienced anything more terrible," she says; "I have no words to explain it."

On such an occasion she would offer herself to the justice of God to suffer whatever He pleased, that so He would not abandon this soul. "It seemed to me then," she says, "that His just anger turned against me, and I felt a frightful anguish, surrounded, as I seemed to be on every side, by desolating objects." She felt weighed down by an overwhelming weight. She beheld an angry God, armed with fury to punish her. Hell seemed open to swallow her up. All was in confusion within her. She was assailed on every side by violent temptations, especially to despair. There is no kind of torture, she says, which she would not have endured to be delivered from her persecutor. She

could only exclaim : "How dreadful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God !" At other times, prostrating herself on the ground, she would say : "Strike, O my God ! burn, consume all that displeases Thee. Spare not my body, my life, my flesh, my blood, provided Thou save eternally this soul." "I confess," she says, "that I could not have long endured such a condition, had not the divine mercy supported me under the rigor of His justice."

She felt ill in consequence, and it was with difficulty that she recovered. "Our Lord often," she says, "made me endure this state." It was from the Sacred Heart of our Lord Itself that she drew the means of satisfying His justice. "I will not leave Thee," were her words to our Lord when interceding with Him in behalf of some souls whom He was resolved on visiting with His chastisement, "until Thou hast pardoned them." "I will do so," He said, "if you will answer for them." "Yes, my God," she replied, "but I will pay Thee with Thy own gifts, which are the treasures of Thy Sacred Heart." "And with this," she says, "He was satisfied."

The period of the annual Retreat for the year 1681 having arrived, Margaret Mary was confined to her bed with fever. The Mother Greyfié, however, trusting to the power of obedience over her, ordered her to leave the Infirmary

and to take her place with the rest. "I consign you, my Sister," she said, "to the care of our Lord Jesus Christ. May He direct, govern, and cure you according to His will." "Though the order surprised me a little," remarks Margaret Mary, "for I was at the time shivering with fever, I went my way nevertheless, full of joy at such an obedience, both on account of the pleasure I felt at seeing myself given over to the care of my good Master, and at having an opportunity of suffering for His love." It was indifferent to her in what manner He was pleased that she should make her Retreat, whether in suffering or joy. "All alike is good to me," she said, "provided He is satisfied; provided I love Him, that is enough for me."

"I was no sooner in retirement," is her account, "than He presented Himself to me. I was lying upon the ground, pierced with cold, and overwhelmed with pain. He raised me and loaded me with caresses, saying to me: 'Now you are wholly Mine, and entirely under My care. I will, therefore, give you back in health to those who placed you sick in My hands.'" Our Lord restored her, in fact, at once to such perfect health, that it seemed as if she had never been ill. All were struck with astonishment to see her, especially the Mother Superior, who knew all that had taken place. "I had never spent a Retreat," says Margaret Mary,

“with such joy and delight. I seemed to be in Heaven, so great were the constant favors, caresses, and familiarity which I enjoyed, both on the part of my Sovereign Lord Jesus Christ, His most Blessed Mother, my Guardian Angel, and my blessed Father St. Francis of Sales.”

What these graces were she does not tell us. Not the least among them would have been the following, of which she makes mention. Our Lord, she tells us, to console her for the affliction He had caused her by effacing His adorable name, which she had engraved and burned upon her heart, traced it Himself interiorly in her heart, as she describes it, with the burning pencil of His pure love. “This He did,” she says, “in a manner which caused me more joy and consolation than the other had caused me grief and affliction.”

But in the midst even of these heavenly favors which our Lord lavished upon her, Margaret Mary could not be happy without satisfying her desire to imitate Him in His suffering life. She therefore resolved on exercising on herself all the rigor which the liberty in which she was left gave her the opportunity of practicing. “And indeed,” she says, “I did so to a considerable extent both by penances and in respect of food and sleep.” She strewed her bed with broken pieces of earthenware, but when she was contemplating some practice of penance to which

she felt strongly inclined on account of its severity, and in order to avenge on herself the injuries received by our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, she was forbidden by our Lord to proceed with it. He wished, He said, to give her back in perfect health to her Mother Superior, since she had consigned her to His care. He would be better pleased, therefore, if she sacrificed her desire than if she carried it out. For being Spirit, He said, He wished also a spiritual sacrifice. "I was quite content," she says, "and resigned."





CHAPTER XXI.

1681—1682.

IT was during the autumn of 1681 that Father de La Colombière visited Paray-le-Monial for the last time. He had stayed there for a few days, as we have already had occasion to mention, when on his way to Lyons, after his return to France at the beginning of the year 1679. It may be well to notice briefly the circumstances which led to his quitting England.

On the 18th of September, 1678, he had written to the Reverend Mother de Saumaise, "What makes me believe that I shall be here still for some time is that there is constantly fresh fruit to be gathered, and that our good Sister Alacoque speaks to me of fresh labors." The outburst, however, of the persecution, which took its rise from Titus Oates' infamous invention of the "Popish Plot," shortly after this date, precipitated events which led to his sudden recall to France. The Chaplain to the Duchess of York was not likely to escape being numbered among the list of the proscribed. At a late hour of the night, guards were placed at the door

of his room in St. James', and he was shortly afterwards confronted with his accuser before a committee of the House of Lords. It was difficult to invent any grounds implicating him in the pretended conspiracy, but he was charged with bringing back others to the Catholic religion, and of having declared that the King, Charles II., was a Catholic at heart. He remained for several months in prison, when, according to the petition of the Lords to his Majesty, he was banished out of the kingdom. Thus, a Martyr only in desire, Father de La Colombière was forced, after witnessing the glorious death of his brethren, to abandon the fruit of his labors and tears until the word of his Superiors should again call him to sufferings or death in the "Land of Crosses," as he styled England.

It was in the beginning of 1679 that Father de La Colombière returned to France, his health broken by his labors, the hardships of his prison, and the suffering which he had been forced to witness. He wrote from Paris to his Provincial at Lyons, on the 16th of January, 1679, to offer his services, telling him that he was sorry to return to his province in such a state of health as to afford but little prospect of his being able to do much that year. He was seized, in fact, with a more violent attack of spitting of blood, and but little hope was entertained of his re-

covery. He was called, however, to Lyons by his Provincial, and appointed to take the spiritual charge of the young Scholastics of the Society. It was when on his way to Lyons for this purpose that he stopped for about eight days at Paray-le-Monial, which lay on his route. He had occasion here to admire the effects of grace which he witnessed in the soul of Blessed Margaret Mary, and he established here several works of piety which have transmitted and kept alive his name at Paray-le-Monial even through the storms and wreck of the Revolution. "I was ill when I came to Paray," he wrote shortly afterwards to Mother de Saumaise; "but in two days I found myself so much better that I was able to work for eight days consecutively from morning till night without feeling any inconvenience from it. I cannot tell you what consolation I received there. I found things in an admirable state. It seems to me that everything has grown during the time I have been away. I saw Sister Alacoque only once, but I was greatly consoled by the visit. She is, as usual, extremely humble and submissive, and has a great love of the Cross and of humiliations. These are the marks of the spirit by which she is led, and they have never deceived any one."

This visit of Father de La Colombière, though a source of such consolation to Margaret Mary,

was not exempt, as was ordinarily the case with her, from some humiliation. For Father de La Colombière having expressed a wish to speak with her in the confessional, and the Mother Greyfié having willingly granted permission for it, complaints were made by some of the Community of the length of time the interview had lasted. The Mother Greyfié was unwilling to lose the opportunity of manifesting Margaret Mary's virtue, and reprehended her publicly in Chapter for what she was well aware might have found a ready excuse in the permission she had herself granted. Margaret Mary, however, true to her favorite virtues, which the occasion gave her so favorable an opportunity of practicing, far from urging any such excuse, turned all to the account of humility, meekness, and patience, and said not a word in support of her own innocence.

It was the sight of these virtues in Margaret Mary, as we have noticed before, that specially impressed Father de La Colombière in his recollection of this visit to Paray, and made him remark to Mother de Saumaise, in writing to her shortly after from Lyons, that these were the proofs which manifested in her the good spirit by which she was led.

Father de La Colombière, employed, as we have seen, at Lyons in the spiritual charge of the young Scholastics of the Society, re-

commended them earnestly to the prayers of Margaret Mary. Perhaps to this source may be traced the eminent services rendered to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart by one who enjoyed at this time the privilege of being trained under the care of Father de La Colombière. The name of Father Joseph de Galliffet is well known as the author of what may be called a classical work on the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, a standing proof of the energy and zeal with which he devoted himself to maintain the interests of this Devotion, both at Rome and in France, and to establish the Devotion itself on a solid theological basis.

How fervent would have been the prayers of Margaret Mary for such an object as that proposed to her by Father de La Colombière, and how deep an interest she took in seeing the Devotion to the Sacred Heart established by means of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, we may judge from the terms in which she writes on the subject to her Director.*

* This letter is commonly regarded as addressed to Father de La Colombière. The reference, however, which is made in it, in such precise terms, to the mission entrusted to the Society of Jesus in connection with the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, would seem rather to assign to it a later date, probably 1689, at which period Margaret Mary had received, as we shall have occasion to see, a special intimation on that

“Why cannot I recount, Reverend Father,” she writes, “all that I know regarding this admirable Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and discover to the whole world the treasures of grace which Jesus Christ has stored up in His adorable Heart, and which He designs to pour forth in profusion on all who shall practice it? I conjure you, Reverend Father, to leave no means untried in order to inspire every one with it. Jesus Christ has shown me, in a manner that admits of no doubt, that it was specially by means of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus that He wished to establish everywhere this solid Devotion, and by means of it to make to Himself an infinite number of faithful servants, perfect friends, and truly grateful children.

“The treasures of graces and blessings contained in the Sacred Heart are unbounded. I do not know that there is any practice of devotion in spiritual life more calculated to raise a soul in a short time to the highest perfection, and to make it relish the true sweetness which is to be found in the service of Jesus Christ.

“I say with confidence that if we only knew how pleasing this Devotion is to Jesus Christ, there is not a Christian, however slight may be subject. The letter, in this case, would have been addressed to Father Rolin, S. J.

his love towards our dear Lord, who would **not** at once adopt its practice.

“Induce especially Religious persons to embrace it ; they will derive such assistance from it that no other means will be required to restore their first fervor and the most exact regularity in the least regular Communities, and to advance to the highest perfection those in which the most exact regularity already exists.

“Our Divine Lord has assured me that those who are employed in laboring for the salvation of souls shall have the art of touching the most hardened hearts, and will labor with marvellous success, if they are themselves penetrated with a tender devotion to His Sacred Heart.

“As regards persons in the world, they will find in this Devotion all the helps necessary for their state of life ; peace in their families, relief in their toils, the blessing of Heaven on all their undertakings, and comfort in their difficulties. In the Sacred Heart they will find a secure place of refuge during life, and more especially at the hour of death. Oh ! what a happiness to die after having had constantly during life devotion to the Heart of Him Who is to be our Judge. In a word, there is no one who would not experience every kind of help from Heaven if he had such a grateful love for Jesus Christ as is contained in devotion to His Sacred Heart.”

Father de La Colombière returned, as we have

seen, from Lyons to Paray-le-Monial in the autumn of 1681. It was, indeed, in order to close his life in the same favored spot where he had some years before consecrated it to the Sacred Heart of our Lord. Not that such an event appeared probable; for his health not having improved, contrary to the expectation of his Superiors, from his stay at Paray, it was determined, with the advice of the medical men, that he should try his native air. His brother was already preparing with due authorization to take him with him into Dauphiné, when, on the eve of the day fixed for their departure, January 29, 1682, Father de La Colombière received an intimation from Margaret Mary, who had been apprised of his intention, begging him, if he could do so consistently with the orders of his Superiors, not to quit Paray. On his inquiring of her the reason, he received from her in reply the following words in writing—"He has told me that He wishes for the sacrifice of your life here." Upon this, Father de La Colombière determined upon prolonging his stay at Paray. A few days after, he became much worse, and closed his holy life on the 15th of February, 1682, at seven in the evening.

Before his death, Father de La Colombière had placed the note which he had received from Margaret Mary in the hands of his Superior. Margaret Mary sent to beg of the Superior to

return it, but received for answer from Father Bourguignet that he would rather part with all the archives of the College than so precious a document.

Margaret Mary received notice of Father de La Colombière's death at four o'clock the following morning. "Pray for him," was the reply she made to the person who brought her the information, "and get all the prayers for him you can." About ten o'clock she wrote to the same person*—"Do not afflict yourself any longer. Invoke him, and fear nothing. He has now more power to help you than ever."

Margaret Mary lost in Father de La Colombière her best friend. Yet she was not troubled at his loss, so intimately were her affections centred in the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord. This would hardly have been a matter of surprise to the Mother Greyfié, who was so well acquainted with her virtue. She remarked, however, that she did not ask to be allowed to practice any penance or say prayers for him, as she was in the habit of doing for others.

* This pious lady, Mdlle. de Bisefrand, was a penitent of Father de La Colombière. She deposed, in 1715, that Father de La Colombière had said to her, before leaving for England, "You will meet, at the Visitation, with a person whose advice you may follow just as if it came from myself. I consult her regarding myself, and I follow her advice."

On her asking the reason, "My dear Mother," she replied, "he stands in no need of it. He is in a condition to pray to God for us, for he is already in Heaven, through the goodness and mercy of the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only, in order to satisfy for some negligence in the exercise of divine love, his soul was deprived of the sight of God from the time of its quitting his body to the moment when his body was laid in the tomb."

"I never observed her regret him," remarks the Mother Greyfié, "but I often heard her express her joy at the thought of his eternal happiness, and thank the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ for all the graces which He had conferred on this worthy Religious, both during his life and at his death."

The body of Father de La Colombière was buried in the church of the Society, where his tomb was frequently visited by the Faithful round about, who had great confidence in the efficacy of his intercession. The precious treasure was confided by the last of the Superiors of the Residence, broken up by the same blow which struck the whole Society, to the care of the Religious of the Visitation, and by them it was jealously guarded, and secured from the profanations which attended the Revolution. It still rests in the seclusion of the Cloister of Paray, not far from the spot which has recently

given up in triumph to the veneration of the Faithful the sacred relics of Blessed Margaret Mary.

Margaret Mary kept as a Feast the anniversary of the death of Father de La Colombière. She addressed him as, "Mirror of all Virtues, Victim of Divine Love, Lily springing from a virgin soil, Angel in purity, Glorious Martyr in desire, who didst breathe forth thy soul in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ." She composed in his honor the following prayer. We may give it in the same spirit in which Blessed Margaret Mary composed it, not anticipating, of course, in any manner, the solemn judgment of the Church, but begging with simple faith his intercession who was designated during his lifetime by our Lord Himself, His "faithful servant."

"O Eternal and Almighty God, Who hast given us in these latter times a model of all sanctity in the person of Thy faithful servant blessed Father Claude de La Colombière, of the Society of Jesus, grant us grace, we beseech Thee, by his holy and powerful intercession with the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, to imitate him in his virtues of charity, simplicity, and humility, that so we may attain to everlasting happiness, through the same Jesus Christ Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen."



CHAPTER XXII.

1682—1684.

THE part which Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié was called upon to take in connection with the mission assigned to Margaret Mary seems to have been to manifest, by the trials to which she subjected her, the divine character of the extraordinary graces with which she was favored, and, at the same time, to leave in the prudent counsels she gave her, a memorial of the interior trials with which Margaret Mary was visited by her Divine Spouse.

Margaret Mary, united as she was with the Sacred Heart of our Lord, suffered also in union with His mystical Body, the Church. Hence her sufferings increased from time to time at certain periods, which have a character of their own in the ecclesiastical year. The days preceding the penitential season of Lent, which by a strange abuse are often made an occasion of greater offence of God, were to her days of special suffering and expiation, and a time often of extraordinary graces.

Thus, on one of the days preceding the Lent of 1682, which followed shortly after the death

of Father de La Colombière, our Lord appeared to her, and placed upon her shoulders a heavy and sharp cross, which He wished her to bear in reparation for the sins committed against Him. "After Holy Communion," is the account she gives of this Vision, "my Divine Spouse presented Himself to me under the form of the *Ecce Homo*, loaded with His Cross, and covered all over with wounds and bruises. His adorable Blood was streaming from Him on every side. 'Will no one,' He said, in a sad and mournful tone, 'have pity on Me and compassionate Me, and take part in My sorrow, in the piteous state to which sinners reduce Me, especially at this time?'" Margaret Mary threw herself at His feet and offered herself to Him. Upon this a heavy cross, set with sharp-pointed nails, was placed upon her shoulders. "Overwhelmed by the weight," she says, "I began to understand better the malice of sin, which I detested so much with all my heart that I would rather a thousand times have cast myself into hell than commit a single one deliberately. He told me that it was not enough for me to carry His Cross, but I must also fasten myself to it with Him, in order to bear Him faithful company, by sharing His pains, contempts, outrages, and other indignities." "I abandoned myself," she adds, "to whatever He was pleased to do with me, allowing myself to be fastened to it at His

good pleasure." She was visited in consequence with a violent attack of illness; it was thus she felt the sharp points of the cross. This lasted, however, only till the beginning of Lent. On Ash Wednesday she had so completely recovered her strength, that she was able to fast the whole Lent.

In the May of this year, 1682, was opened in the diocese of Autun the Jubilee which had been published by Innocent XI., to call in aid the prayers of the Faithful in order to check the advance of the Turkish power, which threatened to overwhelm Christendom.* The effect of these prayers was witnessed in the total overthrow of the Ottoman host by John Sobieski before the walls of Vienna. Sobieski himself gladly referred to this cause the brilliant success of his arms as he prostrated himself to the ground whilst the *Te Deum* was sung in the Cathedral of Vienna in thanksgiving for his marvellous victory. Margaret Mary poured forth her fervent prayers for the common object in which all the Faithful were united, and she

* Innocent XI. published two Jubilees, one in 1681, the other in 1683. The Jubilee referred to here seems to have been the former of the two. It was opened in the diocese of Autun within the Octave of the Ascension, May 10, 1682, and closed on Trinity Sunday, May 24, 1682.

received from our Lord Himself special instructions as to the spirit which should animate her petitions.

“He showed me,” she says, “with the severity of a Judge, that it was not so much on account of the Infidels that His justice was irritated, but that it was His own chosen people who had revolted against Him; that they made use of the familiar access which they had to Him to persecute Him; and that as long as they had been faithful to Him they had tied the hands of His justice and left the hands of His mercy free. ‘But if they do not all amend,’ He added, ‘I will make them feel the weight of My avenging justice. One just soul can obtain pardon for a thousand criminals.’” “During Matins,” she continues, “He said to me, ‘Weep and sigh unceasingly that My Blood should be shed unprofitably for so many souls who abuse it so greatly in these Indulgences. They are satisfied with cutting down the weeds which grow in their hearts without ever trying to root them out. But woe to these souls which remain defiled and parched in the midst of the very source of living waters! they shall never be cleansed or relieved of their thirst.’”

Margaret Mary had learned from our Divine Lord what was His real wish regarding such souls; she knew that He wished to find a means of bringing them back and giving them a place

in His Heart. She therefore addressed herself, she tells us, to His Sacred Heart, and said to Him: "It is here, my Lord and my God, that Thy mercy must place all these faithless souls, in order that they may be justified, and glorify Thee forever." "Yes, I will do so," He replied to her interiorly, "if you promise Me on their part a perfect amendment." "But Thou knowest well, O my God," she rejoined, "that this is not in my power unless Thou enable me by the efficacious merits of Thy Passion."

Our Lord hereupon instructed her that the most pleasing prayer she could offer Him during the holy time of the Jubilee was to ask for three things in His name.

The first was to offer to His Eternal Father the superabundant satisfaction He had made to His justice for sinners upon the Cross, and to beg of Him to apply the merits of His precious Blood to all souls deprived of life by sin, that they might be raised to a life of grace, and might glorify Him eternally.

The second was to offer to Him the burning love of His Sacred Heart, in satisfaction for the tepidity of His chosen people, and to beg of Him, by that ardent love which made Him suffer death, to rekindle their tepid hearts in His service, and to set them on fire with His love, in order that He may be eternally loved by them.

The third was to offer the submission of His will to His Eternal Father, and to beg of Him through His merits that He would complete and perfect His graces, and consummate the accomplishment of His will.

As Margaret Mary was to be conformed in all respects to her Divine Spouse, and as He had already made her share in many of the sufferings of His Passion, so He would bestow upon her His crown of thorns.

This gift was prefigured to her in the following Vision ; it was conferred upon her by means of a repetition of accidental blows which she received and which impressed upon her head a continual pain, encircling it like a crown of thorns.

“As I went to Holy Communion,” she says, “the Sacred Host appeared to me resplendent as a sun, the dazzling brightness of which I could not bear. Our Lord was in the centre, holding a crown of thorns. Shortly after I had received Him, He placed it on my head, saying to me : ‘Receive, My Daughter, this crown in sign of that which will shortly be given to you, in order that you may bear a closer resemblance to Me.’”

Margaret Mary did not understand at the time what this meant, but she experienced soon after the verification of the promise by receiving accidentally on different occasions three severe

blows upon the head. In consequence of the violent pain which they left, and which lasted all her life, it seemed as though her head were constantly encircled with thorns.

She would not have exchanged this mysterious gift for any earthly crown ; and it had an especial value in her eyes, from its placing her under the necessity of often remaining awake during a great part of the night, and thus enjoying the converse of our Divine Lord. She was unable to rest her head upon the pillow, and in this she rejoiced to think that she bore some resemblance to Him Who could find no rest for His head upon the Cross. Such are the sentiments which she expresses herself on the subject to Mother de Saumaise in a letter written to her this year, 1682.

So constant were the infirmities under which Margaret Mary labored at this time that there were not four days throughout the year during which she was free from them. The Mother Greyfié, who knew the power of obedience over her, was glad also at the same time to take advantage of the occasion to obtain from it an additional verification of the divine character of her extraordinary graces. Accordingly, on the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, December 21st, she gave her an order to request of Almighty God the restoration of her health. The following are the terms of the note in

which she communicated this order to her: "I command you," she wrote, "in virtue of holy obedience, to ask of God to let me know whether what passes, and has passed in you since I have had charge of you, comes from His Spirit or from nature, and as a sign that it all comes from God, to suspend your bodily ailments for five months only, so that during that time you may not require any remedies, nor be obliged to quit the ordinary course prescribed by the Rule. But if it is not from God, but only the action of nature in your exterior and interior, ask Him to leave you in your ordinary state, sometimes better, sometimes worse. We shall thus be assured of the truth."

Margaret Mary was required to leave the Infirmary immediately on receiving this note. On her making the prescribed request to our Lord, "I assure you, My Daughter," our Lord replied, "that in attestation of the good spirit which conducts you, I would willingly have accorded her as many years of health as she has asked months, and indeed any other proof she might have desired."

It was during the Sacrifice of the Mass that our Lord fulfilled His promise, and restored her to perfect health. "At the moment of the Elevation of the Sacred Host at Mass," writes Margaret Mary, "I felt all my infirmities sensibly taken from me, just as one might take off

a dress, and I felt perfectly strong, like a person in robust health."

"I have been ever since in such perfect health," writes Margaret Mary, confidentially, in April, 1683, to Mother de Saumaise at Dijon, "that it seems as if nothing could affect it." And thus she continued, to the admiration of the Community, until exactly the five months had expired, when she immediately fell ill again as before.

The Mother Greyfié might well acknowledge in this, as she did, a clear sign of divine agency in the extraordinary favors bestowed on Margaret Mary. But she would yet ask for a further proof in ratification of it.

The following addition, which she appended to the note she had previously given to Margaret Mary, will explain the nature of her request :—

"May 25. I hereby declare that I have witnessed in you such a state of health as I had commanded you to ask of our Lord, and I cannot but acknowledge in consequence that what has passed and still passes in your soul proceeds from the incomprehensible goodness and mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I believe it; but I command you again to pray to God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that for the love of Him, and to free me still more from all doubt, He will continue you

your health for the full term of a year from the date of the first obedience you received. That period elapsed, I abandon you to His good pleasure in regard of your bodily health ; but I require this space of time in order to give me complete assurance."

Perhaps it was not so much for herself, as Monsignor Languet remarks, that the prudent Mother Superior demanded this second proof, as for the sake of the Community, amongst whom there still existed prejudices regarding the extraordinary favors bestowed on Margaret Mary.

A second time was Margaret Mary restored to health, and she passed the whole period specified without once entering the Infirmary.

But whilst our Lord thus marvellously relieved her bodily ailments, He tried her severely with interior sufferings. She made them known, frequently in writing, as we have already said, to the Mother Greyfié ; and in her written replies we possess valuable records of them, as also of the prudent and considerate counsel given by the Mother Superior to her favored Daughter. We present some extracts from them.

"Be disposed to suffer in peace and silence," she writes at one time, "whatever it may please God to send you in the way of sickness, mortifications, contradictions, humiliations, &c. When offered any relief in your ailments take it, and make an offering to God of the compliance and

submission you practice in so doing, in union with the submission and gentleness of our Lord Jesus Christ. This offering will supply for the mortification and suffering you would otherwise have chosen for yourself by bearing your ailment without relief."

"Go to our Lord," she writes again, "full of faith and hope in His infinite mercy and goodness, and with the desire of doing His holy will in everything, in order to testify your love towards Him, and the charity which for the love of Him you wish to cherish towards your neighbors, especially the holy souls suffering in Purgatory. It is a good thought to wish to aid them in making expiation for their sins. In this you have no reason to fear, for you please thereby the goodness of God by following the good movement He gives you. In order the better to do this, place yourself, and all that you have done or may do for the future, in His hands, in order that He may dispose of all as it shall please Him for the benefit of these holy souls. With this be faithful to your religious obligations and the practice of virtue.

"If the interior disposition in which God places you be one of great pain, anguish, and affliction, persevere in it with humility, gentleness, and patience under the hand of God. In your conversation with your neighbors do **not** trouble or disturb yourself.

"If you find that you cannot apply yourself with the attention you would wish, nor without pain and suffering, to your spiritual exercises, it is enough that you submit yourself to God, taking as from His hand the trial He is pleased to send you. He will not allow you to be tried beyond your strength."

"In order to defend yourself against the attacks of your enemy," she writes on another occasion, "repeat the Psalm *Dominus illuminatio mea, quem timebo?* Our Blessed Mother considered it very appropriate for such occasions. She would repeat and often sing the words: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?' You need not fear the father of lies, for he can do nothing to you unless God allows it. Put your trust in the goodness and charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Do not be troubled at anything that can happen to you. It is the glory of a faithful soldier and a mark of his fidelity to be specially hated by the sworn enemy of his Prince.

"Kings and Princes cannot always secure their soldiers against the malice of their enemies. It is not so with our God, Who cannot be surprised or deceived, and Who overthrows our enemy when He pleases, and secures us victory in spite of his rage and our weakness, which is

made strong by divine grace in proportion to our confidence. Do good and hope in the Lord. This is the recommendation of the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of the Prophet. Continue with good courage to aid in the salvation of your neighbors."

"Live in dependence on the providence of God," she writes again, "and receive alike joy and suffering, peace and trouble, health and sickness, as from His hand. Ask for nothing and refuse nothing, but be ever ready to do and suffer whatever His providence shall assign you. The three desires* which torment you are

* Margaret Mary writes to the Mother de Saumaise at Moulins, January 20, 1682: "He has placed in my soul three persecutors which torment me continually. The first, which produces the other two, is so great desire of loving Him, that I should wish to see everything changed into flames of love in order that He may be loved in the Adorable Sacrament. I feel constantly urged to suffer, whilst at the same time I feel a terrible repugnance in the inferior part of my soul to suffering, which makes my crosses so heavy and painful that I should have sunk under them a thousand times, did not the Adorable Heart of my Jesus strengthen and assist me in all my needs. . . . My soul also suffers extreme anguish at being unable as yet to be separated from my body. The greatest sacrifice that I can make is that of continuing still to live. I accept this, however, even till the Day of Judgment, if my God so wills it, though the

good, provided they do not lead you to wish anything contrary to the Rule and obedience. Take care that with the help of God they leave you in a state of holy indifference. Bear these desires in this spirit. Whether they torment you or leave you at rest, it should be the same to you, since you belong wholly to God."

"I have lost the beginning of Matins," she writes again, "in order to read your note and give you these few words in reply, and tell you, my dear child, to rest in peace in the midst of the war within you. He Who has raised it wishes to save you, and it is on this account that He pursues you. Allow yourself to be taken by Him, or rather cast yourself in Holy Communion to-morrow into the arms of that loving confidence which you ought to entertain towards Him. If you have it not already, find it in the Sacred Heart of our adorable Lord, and make use of it as you require it."

thought of being kept apart from my Sovereign Good is harder to bear than a thousand deaths." Towards the close of her life, in her last letter to Father Rolin, she was able to say—"Up to this time I have had three such ardent desires, that I regarded them as three tyrants, which made me suffer a continual martyrdom. These three desires were those of loving God perfectly, of suffering a great deal for His love, and of dying in this ardent love. But now I feel a strange tranquillity of heart, and a cessation of all desires, which astonishes me."

Amidst the fears with which Margaret Mary was constantly tormented lest the extraordinary graces she received might be an illusion of the devil, the Mother Greyfié writes to her as follows :—

“Remember, my dear child, what I have told you before, and now tell you again, that there is no evil in what you mention in your last note, and that if it is the devil who seeks to deceive you he will not gain his end unless you deliberately give way to vanity and a desire of esteem on account of the graces you receive. To avoid this, keep yourself humble within yourself, and be gentle and constant in suffering abjection and humiliations, which are sometimes more keenly felt the smaller and less striking they are. What does it matter whether it be the devil or a good Angel who conducts you, provided you advance on the right way and arrive one day at the perfection God requires of you. The intention of the devil would, doubtless, be bad; yours is to love God and to be humble in body and mind. It will, therefore, turn all to good, and cause our Lord to be glorified in you and by you. This is my desire and hope. Amen.”

The following is the last instruction given by the Mother Greyfié to Margaret Mary :—

“May our Lord, Who afflicts you according to His good pleasure in body and mind, be also,

by His grace and the mercy of His loving Heart, the strength and consolation of your whole being, both bodily and spiritually. Such, my beloved Sister and dear child, is the wish I make you, and my reply to your note in which you describe your present state. I see nothing in it which need make you fear. Suffer or rejoice in peace, according as God gives crosses or holy affections to your soul. During the rest of the time that I remain in charge of this Community, I grant you Holy Communion the first Friday of each month, according to the intention of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Moreover, I grant it you in addition on the last Saturday of each month, until my deposition, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, that she may obtain of the Divine Heart of her Son a Mother Superior who may be like Him and according to His will; and that she may obtain for me the grace of a true and profound humility, by means of which I may be able to please Him, Who resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble. I hope that I shall always receive permission, when I shall not have it in my power to take it myself, to communicate as long as I live on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, as the late good Father de La Colombière declared to be our Lord's desire."

It will be seen from this that the term of the

Mother Greyfié's Superiority was near at hand. She was first, however, to close the eyes of one of her Daughters whose last hours were crowned with a favor obtained by the prayers and self-sacrifice of Blessed Margaret Mary. The young Antoinette Rosalie de Sennecé, received into the number of the "Little Sisters"* at Paray, and prevented by a special grace of our Lord, had made a vow of chastity when only seven years of age. Clothed still in the "Little Habit," she was hardly thirteen, when she was suddenly struck with apoplexy. The Mother Greyfié, seeing her in danger of dying in this state, desired Margaret Mary to beg of our Lord in Holy Communion to grant her consciousness in order that she might receive the Sacraments. Margaret Mary did as she was told, and received from our Lord an assurance that her request would be granted on condition of her making a sacrifice, which, she says, cost her more than anything else. This was to bind herself by vow to go without resistance to the Parlor whenever she should be called to it according to the order of the Rule. "I exhorted her to this," says the

*Such was the title given to the children who, as we have mentioned above, were allowed by St. Francis of Sales, on condition of their showing signs of an inclination to a religious state, to be received for a time into the Monasteries of the Visitation, and to be clothed with the "Little Habit."

Mother Greyfié, who has left us the account herself, "for she appeared afraid to engage herself. She obeyed, and our Little Sister recovered her consciousness, and received all the succors we were desirous to secure for her for her last journey."

But Margaret Mary did not lose her repugnance, so that she was constantly obliged to do herself violence in order to fulfil her vow as often as she was summoned to the Parlor. It was towards the end of April, 1684, that this favor had been granted to her in connection with the little Antoinette Rosalie de Sennecé. In writing, more than a year afterwards, to Mother de Saumaise, at Dijon, on the 24th of August, 1685, she speaks of the repugnance which she feels as still quite fresh. Our Lord would in this manner allow her fidelity to the engagement—which her charity had led her to contract—to be constantly crowned with fresh merit.

Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié closed her six years' Superiority in the month of May, 1684, and quitted Paray to take charge of the Community of Semur, near Auxerre, of which she had been elected Mother Superior. She maintained an intimate correspondence by letter with Margaret Mary, who delighted to have recourse, with an affectionate and grateful

remembrance, to the advice of her former Superior. The Mother Greyfié, on her part, was the means of still giving special encouragement to Blessed Margaret Mary in her difficulties, and assisted her materially to promote the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.





CHAPTER XXIII.

1684—1686.

THE Mother Péronne Rosalie Greyfié was succeeded in her charge as Mother Superior by the Reverend Mother Marie Christine Melin.

Marie Christine Melin, Professed of the Monastery of Paray, had for thirty-four years edified the Community by her religious life, when she was chosen in May, 1684, the Mother Superior.

She was distinguished for the virtues which characterized St. Francis of Sales—gentleness and humility; and, according to the description given of her by the Mother Philiberte Emmanuel de Monthoux, Superior of Annecy, she expressed in herself, together with his favorite virtues, even the style of her holy Father. The only charge ever brought against her by her Daughters was one which she might have shared with the Founder of the Visitation, that of being too good. Charged with the care of the Novices under the Mother Greyfié, she had exhibited in a remarkable degree the qualities required by the Constitutions for that important office, and is described by her contemporaries as “gentleness, prudence, and devotion itself.”

A constant witness of the virtues of Blessed Margaret Mary, Marie Christine Melin had learned to appreciate them highly, and gladly availed herself of the opportunity now offered her of manifesting her sense of her merit. Margaret Mary, at the time that Marie Christine Melin was chosen Superior, was named her Assistant.

As the prudent severity of the Mother Greyfié, by the trials to which she subjected Margaret Mary, had been calculated to place beyond a doubt the divine character of the favors she received, so the kindness of the Mother Melin served no less clearly, though in a different manner, to show the action of divine grace within her. Amidst the marks of esteem and regard which now attended her, she turned with a regret, which could only take its rise from her supernatural love of our Divine Lord, to the remembrance of the trials which she had experienced at the hands of her late Mother Superior.

"How is it possible, my very honored and dear Mother," she wrote to her, shortly after her departure from Paray, "that, beset as I am with so many defects and miseries, I should still feel so great a hunger for humiliations and sufferings? As often as I call to mind how good you were in favoring me sometimes with this delightful food, distasteful as it is to nature,

and how I am now deprived of this happiness, owing no doubt to the bad use I made of it, I feel overwhelmed with grief. I can truly assure you that nothing attached me so strongly to you as this conduct on your part."

What were the sentiments of the Mother Greyfié towards her late Daughter we may gather from the following letter, which she wrote in reply to a second letter written to her by Margaret Mary under the apprehension, in consequence of her silence, that she had forgotten her.

"It is impossible, my very dear Sister, I assure you," writes the Mother Greyfié, "that you should ever lose that place in my heart which our Lord and your virtues have given you. It is no great matter for you, but it is the truth nevertheless, that I love you sincerely, cordially, and unchangeably. You must bear in mind that our good God, Who bears with our little offences against His divine love, would have us also sometimes endure some mortification. And it is all the better for not being of your own choosing, but ordered for you by His divine providence, which has given you, in place of a severe Mother, a kind and good-natured one. Do not be uneasy. It is not difficult for our good God to find a means; and though this kind Mother does not mortify and humble you as I did, He will find others to supply what

you desire, according to His will. So that you will not die of hunger for want of having something to suffer."

Our Lord, on His part, richly repaid Margaret Mary's desire of resembling Him in His sufferings by the graces He lavished upon her.

"My Sovereign Master," she says, giving an account by obedience of the manner in which she passed her Retreat this year, "bestowed His graces upon me in such profusion that it would be difficult for me to express it. I will only say that for several days before entering on it, my God impressed me so strongly with the desire and the spirit of it, that it seemed as though my whole being, body and soul, were absorbed by it. He had so concentrated all my powers within Himself that I had no longer any liberty but to abandon myself to His sovereign will."

On the first day, our Lord presented her His Sacred Heart, as a furnace of love, into which she seemed to be cast, and she was at once penetrated with so burning a fire that it appeared as though she would be reduced to ashes. She heard at the same time the following words: "This is the Divine Purgatory of My love, in which you must be purified; I will afterwards make you find in It an abode of light, and, finally, of union and transformation." "This," she says, "He allowed me to experi-

ence so effectually during the whole of my Retreat, that sometimes I did not know whether I was in Heaven or on earth, so entirely was I filled with God and lost in Him."

Margaret Mary felt some uneasiness, in consequence, during the first days of the Retreat, because she was thus prevented thinking of her sins. Our Lord, however, removed her difficulty in the following manner:—"On the night preceding the day on which I was to make my confession, I felt myself awakened," she says, "and in a moment all my sins were set before me as if written out. When I wished to make my confession, I had but to read them." "I made my confession," she adds, "with so many tears and with such contrition that it seemed as if my heart would break with sorrow for having offended His infinite goodness, Who, meanwhile, was sensibly present to my soul."

After these three days, on receiving Holy Communion, she was placed, as she describes it, in an abode of light and glory, and received so many favors, that a single hour of such joy is enough, she says, to counterbalance all that the Martyrs have ever suffered.

"In the excess of His charity," she says, "He espoused my soul to Himself by an ineffable kind of union, changing my heart into a flame of the devouring fire of His pure love, that it might consume every earthly love that approached it."

Our Lord gave her to understand that, since He destined her to pay continual homage to His state of Victim in the Blessed Sacrament, she should continually sacrifice to Him her whole being by love, adoration, and conformity to the dying life He lives in the Blessed Eucharist, and that she should practice her vows on this model.

The resolutions which she was led to form in this Retreat all bear the stamp of her love for the Sacred Heart of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Her silence should be in remembrance of His. When she spoke, it would be to render homage to the Eternal Word hidden under the sacramental veils.

In taking her refection, she would think of the divine support with which He feeds the soul in the Blessed Eucharist.

Her repose should be to honor the eternal repose of the Son in the bosom of His Father, and His mysterious repose in the Blessed Sacrament ; her troubles and mortifications, to repair the outrages offered to Him in this Mystery of His love.

Her prayers should be offered in union with the prayer which the Sacred Heart is ever offering in the Blessed Sacrament ; her recitation of the Divine Office should be united to the praises which are ever ascending from that adorable Heart to His Eternal Father.

"In all that I do and suffer," she says, "I will enter into the Sacred Heart, to find there the intentions which should animate me, to unite myself to Him, and to beg His assistance."

At the end of each action she would offer it to the Sacred Heart to repair whatever was defective in it.

If she committed any fault, after doing penance for it she would offer in satisfaction one of the virtues of the Sacred Heart in requital for the injury done to the Divine Majesty

In the evening, she would place in the Adorable Heart of our Lord all that she had done during the day that He might purify and perfect whatever was blemished or imperfect in her actions, and render them worthy of being placed in His Sacred Heart, leaving Him to dispose of them all at His good pleasure.

On her feeling apprehensive that she should not be able to carry out these resolutions, our Lord assured her, as she went to Holy Communion, that He would come Himself and impress upon her heart the life which He lives in the Blessed Eucharist, and give her strength to do what He asked of her.

Our Blessed Lady also, who had always taken part in the favors she received, presented herself to her during her Retreat, and placing her Divine Son in her arms, "Take Him," she said, "He will teach you what you are to do."

As Margaret Mary had been chosen by our Blessed Lord to communicate to the Order of the Visitation, and through it to the Church, the precious treasure of the Devotion to His Sacred Heart, He desired now to place her in a position in which she would be able to insinuate the spirit of the Devotion into hearts that would most readily receive it, and serve as a means of transmitting it to others. She had been appointed Assistant about six months when, the Mistress of Novices falling dangerously ill, she was selected for that important office. The Novices, already regarding her as a Saint, had made earnest petitions that she might be appointed their Mistress, and to their happiness they enjoyed her example and instructions for two years.

She soon gained their confidence and affection by her kind and charitable conduct towards them; and whatever she taught them, she led the way by the force of her own example.

Knowing that any effect, to be lasting, in the formation of their character, must be the work of grace, which commonly acts in harmony with the natural disposition, she was careful to study their natural tendencies and capabilities, and to guide each according to the estimate she formed of them.

She endeavored then to inspire them with a great esteem for their vocation, and to impress

upon them the necessity of mortifying their merely natural inclinations ; and, as life in Religion is essentially a struggle, she taught them that it required an unbroken and intrepid spirit.

Her management of her Novices was characterized by gentleness tempered by firmness, and her judgment was shown by the prudence with which she suited the various practices to the capacity of each. She set her face strongly against whatever bore the character of mere human attachment, from a sense of the obstacles it places in the way of a solid love of God.

She wished them always to come to her with great confidence, and was always ready to assist them in their difficulties ; she enjoyed singular advantages for rendering them such assistance, for God not unfrequently made known to her their interior dispositions, and the means of turning them to the best account.

She endeavored to lead them to a true detachment, teaching them to rise above trifles, and to fix their affections on God alone. To this end she aimed at inspiring them with a love of a hidden life, in which they would find the source of a true devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord. With this view also she proposed to them as a practice, by way of preparation for celebrating the approaching day fixed by our Lord for honoring His Sacred

Heart, to animate all their actions with this interior spirit. She endeavored also to lead them to the same end by frequently representing to them the love of our Blessed Lord, and the little return it met with on the part of mankind.

It was, indeed, by means of the simple devotion of her Novices, that our Lord chose to inaugurate, so to say, the practice of the Devotion to His Sacred Heart, which, from this humble beginning, was to strike so deep a root, and bring forth such abundant fruit in His Church.

Let us hear Blessed Margaret Mary's own account of this simple but eventful incident, as she describes it in the narrative of her life: "I found no means," she says, "of making known the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, which was all that I desired. The following was the first occasion His goodness provided me with. The Feast of St. Margaret, my patron Saint, happening to fall on a Friday,* I begged of our Novice Sisters, whom I had charge of at that time, to pay to the Sacred Heart of our Lord whatever little marks of respect they proposed to pay me on that day. This they gladly agreed to do. They prepared accordingly a little altar, and upon it they placed a little picture of the Sacred Heart, sketched with a

* July 20, 1685.

pen.* To this we endeavored to show every mark of honor which the Divine Heart Itself suggested to us. This drew upon me, and upon them also, many humiliations, contradictions, and mortifications."

These contradictions arose from the desire Blessed Margaret Mary had that others of the Community should have an opportunity of taking part with the Novice Sisters in the honor paid to the Sacred Heart of our Lord. With this view she had sent one of her Novices to invite some of the elder Sisters, on whose piety and discretion she thought she could rely. She found, however, that she had not taken sufficiently into account that mysterious opposition which the Devotion was destined to meet with, even in the cloisters of the Visitation, a faint shadow of the more bitter hostility against which it was to make its way in the world. The proposal was summarily rejected by the Sisters, who replied that it was not for Novices or their Mistress to introduce novelties, and that the Rule expressly prohibited the adoption of new prayers or Offices. "Go and tell your Mis-

* This interesting memorial of the first public manifestation of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart is in the keeping of the Sisters of the Visitation at Turin. They have been in possession of it since 1738, when it was presented to them by the Community of Paray

tress," was the answer sent by one* who was highly esteemed by Margaret Mary, "that true devotion consists in the practice of our Rules and Constitutions ; this is what she should teach you, and what you should practice."

The Novice charged with this commission† was greatly surprised at the reception she met with, and hesitated to acquaint her Mistress with the circumstances as they occurred. She merely told her that some were prevented coming. "Say rather," replied Margaret Mary, in a firm though calm and humble tone, "that they will not ; but the Sacred Heart will find a means of making them yield. He will have all from love, and nothing by constraint. We must wait for the time which He has fixed for Himself." The time fixed was no later than the following year, as we shall have occasion to see.

Margaret Mary spent the day with her Novices in honoring the Sacred Heart. She thanked them repeatedly, saying : "You could not, my dear Sisters, have given me a greater pleasure than by these acts of homage to the Sacred Heart, and by consecrating yourselves to It. What a happiness for you, that our Lord

* Sister Mary Magdalen des Escures, of whom mention has been made.

† Sister Frances Rosalie Verchère, who deposed to the circumstances in the juridical process held in 1715.

should have made choice of you to begin this Devotion!"

The joy which the Novices had experienced in thus passing the day was destined to meet with a sudden check. The matter was noised through the Community, and complaints were made of their conduct, and of that of their Mistress. They were reprimanded, and forbidden to make any similar external demonstration. The Mother Superior, whose conduct was characterized by a love of peace, thought it right to forbid Margaret Mary any exterior practice which might come under the notice of the Community, but allowed her the consolation, at the same time, of making use of these devotions within the Novitiate.

Margaret Mary, in the meantime, felt nothing so much in all that was taking place as the injury which she feared might be done to the Sacred Heart. She had recourse in her difficulty to our Lord Himself. "Fear nothing, My Daughter," He replied; "I will reign in spite of My enemies, and of all who may think to oppose Me." She remained, upon this, in peace, and left all in His hands, though threatened by some of the Community that, if she continued her design, the Superior of the Monastery should be informed of it, that he might, by his authority, put a check to these novelties.

Margaret Mary would often repeat to herself

the words which our Lord Himself had taught her, and which she adopted, in a manner, as her device.* They express the secret of that divine peace which reigned undisturbed in her soul amidst all her trials and contradictions.

Perhaps what she suffered now held no small place in that mysterious prospect which was given her by our Lord in a former visit with which He favored her, and in which He showed her all that she was to suffer during the rest of her life. But our Lord imparted to her, at the same time, a source of divine strength, which would enable her to bear all that was in store for her. "He told me," she says, "that I had nothing to fear, for that He designed to confer upon me a fresh and still greater grace. It was that I should never lose sight of Him, and that I should constantly enjoy His intimate presence." "This favor," she adds, "I regard as surpassing all that He has ever bestowed upon me, and from that day I have always had my Saviour intimately present with me."†

* Je veux tout souffrir sans me plaindre,

Puisque son amour m' empêche de rien craindre.

† It may be interesting to notice the description which Margaret Mary herself gives of the intimate presence of our Divine Lord which she enjoyed. "He instructs me Himself," she says, in writing to Mother de Saumaise at Moulins, "to describe it to you in the following manner: It is as if a powerful monarch, urged with a

It would seem to be in reference to the trial which Margaret Mary was now undergoing that the Mother Greyfié writes to her towards the close of this year. "It seems to me," she says, "that were I in your place I would keep myself close to, or rather within, the Sacred desire of exercising his charity, were to cast his eyes upon the poorest and most wretched of all his subjects in order to enrich him with a profusion of favors, the greatest of which should be that he would deign to abase himself to walk constantly by the side of this poor wretched creature, bearing a torch in his hand, and clothed in all the splendor of his royal robes; and then, after thus showing himself, should hide the light in the darkness of night, in order to give this poor creature more confidence to approach him, to listen to him and speak to him with confidence, and to receive his caresses, whilst he took care to provide for his wants and all that concerned him."

How similar, as we have already had occasion to notice, is the account given by St. Teresa in her description of what she speaks of as the highest kind of interior Vision. "It seemed to me," she says, "that our Lord was constantly walking at my side. However, as I saw no image, I could not say under what form; but I felt clearly that He was always on my right, and was witness of all I did. . . . In this interior Vision," she says, "the soul knows clearly, that Jesus Christ, the Son of the Blessed Virgin, is present; we see that the Sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ bears us company, and wishes also to favor us with His graces."

Heart of our Divine Master, and remain there entirely abandoned to His care and good pleasure."

Amongst the restrictions which the Mother Melin had thought it well, for the sake of peace, after the incidents on the Feast of St. Margaret, to impose on Margaret Mary, none was more deeply felt by her than the prohibition to communicate on the first Friday of the month.* She bore it in silence, but our Lord, Who had enjoined her this practice, Himself interposed, as He had done on a former occasion, to enable her to carry out His wishes. A young Professed Sister† fell dangerously ill, and in a few days seemed to be at the point of death. As Mar-

* Monsignor Languet, though with some hesitation, refers this incident to the period of the Mother Greyfié's Superiority; but it appears, from the documents of the Monastery of Paray, that its proper place is here, about August, 1685.

† Sister Frances Rosalie Verchère. She was one of Margaret Mary's first Novices, the Professed Sisters remaining in the Noviceship for a year after their Profession. She was joint authoress with Péronne Rosalie de Farges (also a Professed Novice) of the contemporaneous memoirs of Blessed Margaret Mary, which, together with Margaret Mary's own narrative, form the principal authentic documents relating to her life. It was in the arms of these, her two former Novices, as she had herself predicted, that Blessed Margaret Mary expired.

garet Mary was praying for her recovery, our Lord intimated to her that the Sister would continue in the same state until the Mother Superior renewed her permission for the Holy Communion as He had ordered. Margaret Mary felt herself in a state of most trying perplexity. On the one hand she was desirous of acting in obedience to her Mother Superior, whilst, on the other, our Lord pressed her strongly to acquaint her how displeasing her prohibition was to Him.

She resolved, in her difficulty, to have recourse to the advice of one of the elder Sisters,* in whose virtue she had great reliance, and wrote to her in confidence a note, in which she explained to her the grounds of her painful perplexity.

Sister Margare^t Magdalen des Escures counselled her to explain the whole matter to the Mother Superior. Margaret Mary consented, though with extreme reluctance, and told the Mother Melin what our Lord had given her to understand. The Mother Melin consented at once to grant what was required of her, on condition of Margaret Mary praying for the

* This was Sister Mary Magdalen des Escures, whose name has been mentioned before, and who was destined to play an important part, as will be seen, in the recognition of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart by the Community of Paray.

recovery of the invalid. Margaret Mary did so, and Sister Frances Rosalie was pronounced at once out of danger, whereas, a short time before, little hope was entertained of her recovery, owing to the severe pains she suffered, and of which the medical men could give no account.

The marvellous change in the Sister's health was, however, rendered still more remarkable by a further circumstance. For whether it was that the Mother Melin forgot to accord the actual permission to communicate, or that Margaret Mary supposed that a second permission was necessary, she did not resume her Communion, but continued to beg of the Sacred Heart the Sister's recovery. Our Lord told her that her Novice should not recover until she had resumed Holy Communion, according to His wish. Margaret Mary's repugnance to whatever wore the air of singularity kept her back from making the request a second time. She continued thus for five or six months, visiting the Sister in the meantime, and encouraging her to turn her sickness to account, when she determined at length to tell the Mother Superior what she had heard from our Lord. The Mother Melin gave the requisite permission at once, and the Sister was at once restored to perfect health. It is not necessary to say what joy this event caused Margaret

Mary, especially as it left her once more free to receive our Lord in Holy Communion.

In her manner of conducting her Novices, her instructions, drawn as they were from the Sacred Heart of our Lord, were likely to be of a solid character. The foundation of all else she would have laid in a perfect conformity with the will of God. As a consequence of this, she inculcated especially unreserved obedience to the Rules. She could not endure any deliberate faults, and insisted greatly on fidelity to the inspirations of grace. She strove to ground the Novices in humility, and urged them to keep themselves disengaged from all trifles, in order that they might truly give their hearts to God. The treasure of a Religious, she told them, should be the Sacred Heart of our Lord.

She endeavored to inspire them with a great desire of Holy Communion, and taught them to offer to our Lord in return a renunciation of their own inclinations and the conquest of their passions. What she especially desired to see in her Novices was a love of prayer, and its attendant, a love of silence and recollection. Neither, she knew, could spring except from a generous spirit of mortification. She endeavored, by her conversations, to enkindle in their hearts that fervor which would enable them to persevere in it ; and in order to supply

them with fresh vigor in the practice of piety, she would vary the exercises of it.

Arrived, as she was herself, at the highest sanctity, Margaret Mary manifested, in the direction of her Novices, that discretion and prudence which is the key-stone and crown of all virtue. She knew that they must often fall into faults in which there would be but little that was deliberate, and she taught them to rise from them with advantage, and gather from them a fresh increase of humility. She would have them also seek, in the Sacred Heart of our Lord, the opposite virtue which they might offer to Almighty God in reparation of their fault, and advance with renewed confidence in the way of perfection.

She recommended them to call to mind, as often as they heard the clock strike, that happy moment when the Adorable Heart of our Lord was first formed by the operation of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Ever-Blessed Virgin, and to thank the Sacred Heart for the infinite love It has manifested to men.*

* We have occasion to observe that Margaret Mary not only instilled this practice into the minds of her Novices, but inspired her late Mother Superior also with the desire of establishing it in her Community at Semur. "I have bethought myself lately," writes the Mother Greyfié to her in 1688, in almost the same terms, "of suggesting to our Sisters here the pious practice of

The Novices received her suggestions with great alacrity, and, under pretence that they were afraid they might otherwise forget them, they induced her to give them in writing. This she did with great good-nature, in spite of the great dislike she had to write anything. She required, as a condition, that they should consecrate themselves more entirely to the Sacred Heart of our Lord.

The devil, who had threatened to persecute her unrelentingly, and knew well the value of the work she was doing, did not fail to do all in his power to get her out of the Noviceship. Perhaps, also, the low opinion she entertained of herself led her to use efforts herself to this effect. But she learned, from a Vision with which our Lord favored her at Christmas (1685), that she was still to continue in this charge for another year. Our Lord gave her to understand that He designed to make use

calling to mind, as often as they hear the clock strike, the blessed and happy moment when the Adorable Heart was formed by the operation of the Holy Ghost in the most pure womb of our Sovereign Lady, and of thanking the Adorable Heart for Its infinite charity to us." Perhaps we may discover, in this pious practice, the germ of the perpetual adoration of the Sacred Heart which is embodied in what is now known as the "Guard of Honor."

of her Novices as foundation-stones to the building He wished to raise, and showed them to her, whilst she heard at the same time the words: "Feed My lambs." She continued, then, to strengthen them in devotion to the Sacred Heart, encouraging them to advance in solid virtue by fidelity to their Institute. "The way of God for us," she told them, "is by our holy Rules." "Feed your hearts, my dear Sisters," she would say, "with them. They will introduce you to that interior life, that life hidden with God, which leads us to pure suffering, in which the perfection of love is found."

So deeply engraved in her heart was the desire of seeing the Devotion to the Sacred Heart established, that she found it difficult to speak of anything else. "If you only knew, my dear Mother," she wrote at this time to the Mother Greyfié, "how strongly urged I feel to honor the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ! It seems to me that I live only for this."* "Our Lord has again favored me with a visit," she added, "and assured me, that the pleasure He takes in being known, loved, and

* Margaret Mary, in writing to Mother de Saumaise, describes her employment, as Mistress of Novices, as an exercise of the love of the Sacred Heart. "The love of the Sacred Heart," she says, "forms at present my whole occupation, whether in prayer or in anything else."

honored by His creatures is so great, that He has promised me, if I mistake not, that all who shall be devoted and consecrated to Him shall never perish; that, as He is the source of all blessings, He will shed them abundantly on every spot where the picture of the Divine Heart shall be exposed and honored; that He will give union to disunited families; protect and assist those that are in any necessity and address themselves to Him with confidence; that He will pour the sweet unction of His burning charity upon all Communities that honor It and place themselves under Its special protection, and that He will turn aside all the blows of divine justice in order to restore them to grace when they are fallen from it. He has given me to understand that His Sacred Heart is the holy of holies, the holiness of love; that He wishes to be known now that He may act as Mediator between God and men, for He is all-powerful to procure peace and to obtain mercy for us by turning aside the chastisements which our sins have drawn down upon us."*

* This letter appears to have been decisive in its effect upon the mind of the Mother Greyfié. Though she had always encouraged her former Daughter in her devotion to the Sacred Heart, she now ambitioned to share with her the title of Disciple of the Sacred Heart. She raised an oratory in honor of the Sacred Heart, and placed in

On the Feast of her holy Founder, at the beginning of the following year, 1686, Margaret Mary received, as usual, special light and graces with reference to the mission with which she was entrusted, of promoting the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, and was instructed regarding the intimate connection of the Devotion with the spirit of the Order. "I will tell you, my dear Mother, as I have no secrets with you," she writes to the Mother de Saumaise, "that on the day of the Feast of our holy Founder, it seemed to me that this great Saint gave me to understand very sensibly the great desire he had that the Sacred Heart should be known, honored, and loved throughout his whole Order, saying that it was the most efficacious means he could obtain for raising it from its falls, and preventing its yielding to the designs of a spirit

it a picture of the Sacred Heart which she had had made, and celebrated with solemnity the Feast of the Sacred Heart. She sent a miniature of this painting to Margaret Mary, and twelve pictures also for as many of the Novices, who were most ardent in their devotion to the Sacred Heart. We may judge of the difficulties which Margaret Mary had met with when we find her writing in reply to the Mother Greyfié that so far from anticipating such a present, she had expected that she was going to tell her to give up all thought of attempting to introduce the Devotion. The sight of the welcome present seemed to give her, she says, a new life.

most foreign to it, * full of pride and ambition, by which the devil seeks to ruin the spirit of humility and simplicity, which is the foundation of the whole building. He will not be able to succeed if we have the Sacred Heart for protector, defender, and support."

The encouragement she received from her holy Founder served to prepare Margaret Mary for a very severe trial to which she was herself shortly to be exposed, on occasion of a Postulant, whom her friends, regardless of her want of vocation, were desirous of forcing, in a manner, into the Order. A virtue, less solidly founded than that of the humble Apostle of the Sacred Heart, would probably have sunk under it.

* This, it would seem, was Jansenism, which made many attempts to gain an entrance into the Order. It found an invincible antagonist in the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. The Monastery of Paray-le-Monial remained always untainted by it.





CHAPTER XXIV.

1686—1688.

THE family of Vichy Chamron, one of the most powerfully connected in the province of Burgundy, had given many of its members as subjects to the Monastery of Paray. Three sisters of the powerful family d'Amanzé, allied to the family de Chamron, had made their Profession in the monastery some years before, and one of them was still living in 1686. The Sisters d'Athose and Lévy Châteaumorand were also connected with the same family; whilst amongst the young persons trained under the care of the monastery there were at this time three of the family d'Amanzé, and two also of the family of Vichy Chamron.

It was to this family, de Chamron, so powerful in the province, and interwoven by so many ties with the Community, that the young Postulant belonged, the question of whose vocation was to involve Blessed Margaret Mary in such trying difficulties. Placed in the monastery with the intention that she should there take the Religious Habit, she stood in too great an awe of the displeasure of her father, the Count de

Chamron, to avow her real disinclination for the life of the Daughters of the Visitation. But though she passed the scrutiny of the rest of the Community, she could not escape the judgment of her Mistress, who, viewing the truth in the light of the Sacred Heart, did not fail to discover the want of a true vocation. This conviction, after taking every means in her power to satisfy herself upon the point, Margaret Mary communicated to the Mother Superior, and recommended, with a view to avoid giving more publicity than was necessary, that she should be removed by her family. Margaret Mary's judgment regarding the vocation of the young Postulant was met with marked displeasure on the part of several of the Community, and created great indignation amongst the members of her family without. Margaret Mary was called a visionary; she was declared to be a hypocrite; it was said that she was deceived by the devil; and that it was evident that she was incompetent to form a judgment of a true vocation. Margaret Mary, nevertheless, remained firm in her judgment, and bore all that was said against her with the greatest meekness and in silence.

Amongst those who were most bitter against her was the Cardinal de Bouillon, an intimate friend of the illustrious family of Chamron. He was Lord of Paray in virtue of his dignity of *Abbot in commendam* of Cluny. He was, per-

haps, that powerful Prince of whom Blessed Margaret Mary speaks, and before whom the threat was held out that she should be compelled to appear. The humble but unwavering spirit, however, of the Disciple of the Sacred Heart did not for a moment quail before his power, though she was threatened with dismissal from her office, and with even being thrown into prison. She maintained her tranquillity amidst all with a peace and gentleness which filled the Community with admiration.

What, perhaps, was the cause of a severer trial to Margaret Mary was the opinion which was formed of her by a Religious in high position, a friend of the family of Chamron, who enjoyed in common estimation a reputation for great sanctity. Perhaps his personal regard for the family of the young Postulant was allowed in some measure to blind his judgment. He lost no opportunity of speaking in disparaging terms of the holy Mistress of Novices: he charged her with hypocrisy and obstinacy, called her a visionary, and declared that her seeming virtue was mere illusion.

Nothing serves to put the true humility of Margaret Mary in a clearer light than the manner in which she received these charges against herself. "I see nothing in myself but what deserves eternal punishment," she writes to the Mother Greyfié, to whom she lays open in con-

fidence the secrets of her heart, "for I have **not** only been deceived, but I have been unhappy enough to deceive others by my hypocrisy, without, however, intending it. What confirms me in this opinion of myself is that such also is the opinion of that good servant of God. I have reason to be most thankful to the goodness of our Lord for having brought him here to put an end to the false opinion which was entertained of me."

The only grief which Margaret Mary felt in consequence of the persecution raised against her arose from the thought that God might be thereby offended. "I beg of you to tell me," she wrote to the Mother Greyfié, shortly afterwards, "whether I ought to allow myself to be afflicted at all the annoying consequences produced by this cross, because of God being greatly offended thereby. It is this alone which causes me pain."

In the midst, however, of these trials which our Lord allowed her to experience at the hands of one Religious, He had provided her an unexpected consolation, and in a manner she little anticipated, from the charity of another. A good Religious, "a great servant of God" (it is thus she names him in mentioning the circumstance to the Mother Greyfié), wrote to her at the beginning of Lent to tell her that, whilst saying Mass he had felt strongly urged to offer

the Holy Sacrifice every Saturday during the year for her intention. This valuable present, it may be mentioned to show the charity of Margaret Mary, she offered to share with the Mother Greyfié.

Her Novices, in the meantime, who entertained so deep a regard for their Mistress, and who had so many opportunities of observing her kindness and consideration for the young Postulant, could not conceal their sense of the injustice done to her, and gave open expression to their feelings in defence of her. Margaret Mary, however, at once checked this outburst of natural feeling, and reproved them severely for indulging in sentiments so little in harmony with the designs of the Sacred Heart of our Lord, Who would have them manifest their love for Him by bearing in silence the trials which He sent them. "It is He Himself," she said, "Who has allowed us to meet with this cross, in order to prepare us for His Feast; and instead of embracing it with love, we seek only to shake it off and rid ourselves of it." "This comes," she continues, "from the too great love we have of ourselves; this makes us fear to lose our reputation and the good opinion which we wish others to entertain of us, and leads us to justify ourselves, to look upon ourselves as innocent and others guilty, and to think that we are always in the right and others in the wrong."

As regards herself, it was the intimate union she enjoyed with the Sacred Heart of our Lord that gave her the secret of preserving profound peace, and even joy, in the midst of the storm of persecution which assailed her. "It seemed as though all hell were let loose against me," is the description she gives of it, "and as if all conspired to annihilate me." "I enjoyed, however," she says, "great peace within, and I never felt such joy as when I was menaced with imprisonment, and with being forced to appear, like my good Master, before an earthly Prince, as an object of mockery, and as a visionary carried away by fancies and illusions."

Our Lord had provided her a firm support in her severe trials by giving her a wise and enlightened Director in the person of Father Rolin, S.J. Father Ignatius Rolin had come to Paray-le-Monial, in 1685, as Superior of the Residence of the Fathers. He came strongly prejudiced against Margaret Mary; but his first acquaintance with her was sufficient to change his sentiments, and the second interview convinced him of the high degree of sanctity to which he was called to direct her. Margaret Mary, on her part, was led to place great confidence in him, and she received great assistance from him in the difficult position in which she was now placed.

"The spirit which guides you is not a spirit

of darkness," he wrote to her, in reply to a question which her distrust of herself had led her to put to him ; " its guidance is good, for it is always in subordination to obedience, and leaves you in peace when once your Mother Superior has spoken. I do not think, after considering the matter in the presence of our Lord, that, in the persecutions from which you suffer, it is the devils who are allowed to exercise their rage against you. It is the work of divine love, and it is a consolation to think that He makes use of souls most dear to Him to make you suffer. The Martyrs had not this consolation in their torments. I allow you to attribute all that happens to your own fault, though all is rather an effect of the goodness of God than of His justice."

Margaret Mary had feared lest his own reputation for judgment and prudence might suffer from his appearing as the advocate of her cause. " Fear nothing for me," writes Father Rolin, " the holy Father de La Colombière is my security and guarantee."

In regard of the threats held out to her of denunciation before the tribunal of an earthly potentate, the " earthly Prince," of whom she speaks, of dismissal from her office, and imprisonment, the counsels of her wise Director breathe the spirit of the Apostles, who, we are told, " went from the presence of the council

rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."* He urges her to find her joy in the thought of the love of our Blessed Lord, and to leave all in peace in His hands. "Even though all that is uttered against you were proclaimed to the whole world, it would only be a further grace," he says, "conferred upon you by our Lord. Let them, then, lay information before whom they please, you have reason only to rejoice at it. Dismissal, imprisonment, all is but the love of Jesus Christ for you. What I ask of you is an entire abandonment of yourself to Him, and a heart ready to do and suffer everything."†

* Acts v. 41.

† It would seem that, as our Blessed Lady had always taken part in the great graces bestowed on Margaret Mary, so it was through her intercession that she received light to guide her in this question of the vocation of the young Postulant which involved her in such troubles. We may infer this from what she writes at a later date to Sister de Thélis at Lyons, who had consulted her regarding a Novice. "We should have recourse," she says, "to the Blessed Virgin, our good Mother and Advocate, who will not, as I hope from her goodness, refuse you her aid. Say for this intention the Thirty Days' Prayer for a month, to beg of her that, if the Novice is not suited for you, she would prevent her being received to her holy Profession. I assure you that this prayer has produced marvellous effects in this

The time had now come which our Lord had fixed for spreading the divine fire of the Devotion to His Sacred Heart to the whole Community. The circumstances under which this took place were so surprising that it was manifest that this was indeed the "change of the right hand of the Most High," and that our Lord, in Whose hand are all hearts, had Himself turned the hearts of all to His most Sacred Heart."*

Community in similar cases. Within the last twelve or thirteen years it has obtained for us from our good Mother this favor, that no one has ever engaged herself unless suited to our kind of life. For either they ask to leave when we are on the point of receiving them, or some obstacle arises to prevent their being received."

* Even in the height, however, of the opposition raised against Margaret Mary, we have reason to see that there was an under current, as it were, of feeling in favor of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. Margaret Mary wrote to the Mother de Saumaise on the 20th of March, 1686: "Our very honored Mother (the Mother Melin) hopes that our Community will raise later a chapel containing a beautiful picture of the Sacred Heart." The Mother Greyfié also, writing to Margaret Mary on the 18th of May, 1686, seems to express an anticipation of what was to take place shortly afterwards.

'All will go on well," she says, "with God's help; His holy will be every day more respected and better carried out."

The instruments, too, which He used to effect His purpose were those especially who had hitherto been most marked in their opposition to the Devotion.

On the last day of the Octave of Corpus Christi, Sister Mary Magdalen des Escures* requested Margaret Mary to allow her to have the picture of the Sacred Heart which had been sent by the Mother Greyfié, as she wished to expose it in the Choir, and to invite the Sisters to join in paying the homage of their devotion to it. It is hardly necessary to say that it was with feelings of great joy that Margaret Mary acceded to her request, though she made no remark, and waited, not without many a fervent prayer, to see the issue.

The following morning, Friday, the day fixed by our Blessed Lord for the Feast, Sister Mary Magdalen prepared in due time a little altar, if such it might be called, in front of the "grille ;"

* Mention has been made more than once of Sister Mary Magdalen des Escures, one of the elder Sisters. She is styled by her contemporaries, on account of her exact regularity, "A living Rule." Margaret Mary placed great confidence in her virtue, though, from her attachment to the letter of the Rule, she had shown a marked opposition to every attempt to introduce the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, which she regarded with groundless apprehension as an innovation on the simplicity of the Institute.

upon it she placed the picture, decked with flowers, and in a notice written with her own hand, she invited all the Spouses of our Lord to come and pay their homage to His Sacred Heart.

All were greatly surprised, and not the less so on finding that the invitation came from one who had been hitherto so marked in her opposition to the Devotion. All difficulties seemed at once to disappear; all combined by giving up their hearts, as by one consent; they acknowledged that the change was truly the work of God, and they saw in it the verification of what Margaret Mary often said, that "the Heart of Jesus would reign in spite of those who opposed It."

All were enthusiastic also in doing what lay in their power to have a picture executed of the Sacred Heart; for it was to this also that the invitation of Sister des Escures had extended.

Even the Little Sisters contributed from the money supplied them by their parents for their little amusements. The Lay Sisters especially distinguished themselves by the zeal with which they labored in the garden in order to be able to make an offering towards the work they had so much at heart.

The Mother Melin, however, judged that it would be better to wait till they should be in a

position to build a chapel in honor of the Sacred Heart. It was indeed commenced this year, and was solemnly opened in 1688. It was built in the garden within the enclosure.

This act of homage to the Sacred Heart proved a source of abundant graces to the Mother Melin, and Margaret Mary declared, "That our Lord was so much gratified with the care she had taken to procure the erection of a sanctuary in which His Sacred Heart might be honored, that in recompense He promised her the singular favor of dying in an act of pure love." The fruits of this marvellous establishment of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart were not slow in showing themselves in the Community by a striking renewal of fervor, which seemed to gain fresh strength every day.

Margaret Mary, in her joy at what had so wonderfully taken place, made her Novices join with her on this auspicious day, June 21, 1686,* in a *Te Deum* of thanksgiving. "I have now nothing more to desire," she said to them,

* It is not without significance that the day on which Father de La Colombière consecrated himself to the Sacred Heart, as also this on which the fire of the Devotion spread through the Community of Paray, should have been the Feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, distinguished, as St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi tells us, for his burning, though hidden love, of the Sacred Heart of the Incarnate Word.

“since the Sacred Heart is known, and begins now to reign over the hearts of others. Do what you can, my dear Sisters, that It may reign forever in yours as your Sovereign Lord and Spouse.”*

* Margaret Mary gave expression to her sense of joy and gratitude to Sister Mary Magdalen des Escures in the following note, which she wrote to her: “It is in obedience to the Adorable Heart of Jesus, my dear Sister, that I congratulate you on your happiness in having been chosen to render this service to the Heart of our good Master by the courage you have shown in being the first to procure Its being loved, honored, and known where it seemed impossible for It to gain access. He wishes to have the love and homage of His creatures from a free and loving will, without constraint or dissimulation. And it seems to me that the great desire our Lord has that His Sacred Heart should be honored by a special worship is in order to renew in souls the effects of His Redemption, by making His divine Heart, as it were anew, Mediator between God and men, whose sins are so multiplied that it requires the whole extent of Its power to obtain mercy for them and the graces of salvation and sanctification, which It desires so earnestly to impart to them in abundance, and especially to our Institute, which has so great a need of this succor that I think it is one of the most efficacious means for raising it from its falls, and for providing, as it were, an impregnable fortress against the assaults which the enemy is constantly making upon it, in order to overthrow it by a foreign spirit of pride and ambition, which he

So entirely had our Lord established His reign in the heart of Blessed Margaret Mary herself, that, like His holy Precursor, she thought only of His glory, losing in the thought of it all thought of herself. "This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." * Such is almost precisely the expression she gives to her own sentiments. "I shall die happy," she writes to the Mother Greyfié, "now that the Sacred Heart of my Saviour begins to be known and myself unknown; for it seems to me that I am now, by His mercy, almost annihilated in point of esteem and reputation in the minds of others. This gives me greater consolation than I can express."

Though Margaret Mary had already attained to such perfection in her actions, she could not rest satisfied without binding herself expressly by vow to do whatever she judged to be most perfect. She had considered seriously for some time this important step, and she had for several years practiced the substance of this vow with wishes to introduce in place of that of humility and simplicity, which is the foundation of the whole building. I acknowledge to you that it seems to me that it is our holy Founder who earnestly desires the introduction of this Devotion into his Institute, because he knows well the effects it is capable of producing. I address these few words to you as my dear friend in the Sacred Heart."

* St. John iii. 29, 30.

as great fidelity as if she were really bound by it. The effect of the calumnies and persecution with which she had been assailed seems to have been to strengthen her fidelity and to attach her more closely to the Cross, and she chose this time for finally binding herself by her vow, which she did on the last day of October, 1686. It had been approved of by her Director, Father Rolin, in a letter which he had written to her shortly before his leaving Paray, whence he was recalled by his Superiors, September 18th, 1686.

"I approve," he wrote, "of your making the vow you spoke of, at the end of the Retreat which you are shortly to make. Should you find afterwards that it is the occasion of any trouble to you, it will be no longer binding on you—you will be entirely released from it. Either I myself, or whoever else holds my place with regard to you, will have full power to explain the vow whenever any difficulties arise regarding it, or even to dispense you from it, if it be thought well for the greater glory of God."

A copy of the vow has been preserved written in her own hand. "The following is a vow," she says, "which I have felt urged for some time to make, but to which I did not wish to bind myself except with the advice of my Director and my Mother Superior.

"A vow made on the eve of All Saints, 1686,

in order to bind, sacrifice, and consecrate myself more entirely, absolutely, and perfectly to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The first article comprises in substance what is expressed in detail in the following sixteen articles: "O my only Love, I will endeavor to hold in subjection and submission to Thee all that is within me, doing what I believe to be most perfect or most glorious to Thy Sacred Heart, from Which I promise to withhold nothing in my power, and not to refuse to do or suffer anything in order to make It known, loved, and glorified."

As Margaret Mary thought of the multitude of different points to which this vow engaged her, she was inclined to feel a great dread lest she might fail in them. But our Lord Himself reassured her. He told her that she would find in the love of His Sacred Heart a secret power, which would remind her of her engagements, give her strength to execute them, supply for her deficiencies, and punish her with remorse if she failed. "What do you fear," were the words she heard addressed to her in the bottom of her heart, "since I have given Myself security for you? The unity of My pure love will serve to keep you attentive amidst the multiplicity of all these things. I promise you that it shall repair the faults you may commit, and it will itself punish you for them."

“These words,” she says, “impressed me with so great a confidence and assurance that such would be the case that, in spite of my great frailty, I no longer fear anything, having placed all my confidence in Him Who can do all things, and from Whom I hope for all and nothing from myself.”

She had been prepared for this generous act of love by being placed in a special manner under the protection of the seraphic St. Francis of Assisi. On the day of his Feast, October 4, 1686, she beheld the Saint clothed in ineffable splendor, and raised, as it were, in dignity and glory above the rest of the Saints, in consequence of his conformity with the suffering life of our Lord, and the singular love he bore to the mystery of His Passion. It was this, she was given to understand, which had urged our Divine Lord to bestow upon him the impression of His sacred Wounds, and had rendered him a singular favorite of His Sacred Heart. He possessed, in consequence, great power in applying the merits of His precious Blood, especially in behalf of sinners, and of appeasing the offended justice of God. He used his power especially in favor of Religious who had fallen from their first fervor, and he constantly pleaded for them. “After having shown me all these things,” says Margaret Mary, “the Divine Spouse of my soul gave him to me to be my guide, as a mark of

His divine love, that he might guide me in the pains and sufferings which should come upon me."

Trials still awaited Margaret Mary, if they could be called trials which had the power only of affecting her, as it were, exteriorly, and could not disturb the profound and unbroken peace of her soul. What was the tranquillity of soul which she enjoyed we may judge from the marvellous subject of scruple which made it necessary for her Director, Father Rolin, to assure her, in his parting letter, from which we have already quoted: "You are not to consider that it is a sign of your being in any way hardened that you experience that peace which our Lord allows you to enjoy in your crosses." And again: "It is no mark of reprobation that you feel no movement of joy or sorrow but those which the Holy Spirit, Who guides you, impresses on you."

Our Lord, in the meantime, filled her with consolation at seeing the wonderful spread of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart through the Community. The exterior practice of the Devotion was publicly recognized, and served as an evidence of its final triumph. Thus, upon Margaret Mary's quitting her office of Mistress of Novices, which she did at the close of the year 1686, several of her Novices, who left the Noviciate at the same time, resolved on carrying

with them a little picture of the Sacred Heart, which they had been in the habit, in their Noviceship, of bearing about with them, each in her turn, in order to pay it every mark of honor during the day. This picture they placed in a retired part of the monastery, and there offered their devotions before it. The spot, embellished with such ornaments as their piety suggested, grew gradually into a little oratory or chapel. It is of this that Margaret Mary speaks, in writing in 1688 to the Mother de Saumaise: "This little chapel," she says, "is the first which has been raised in honor of the Sacred Heart. Our dear Sister des Escures has charge of it. It is a little gem, such taste and care is bestowed upon it."*

* The little picture brought from the Noviceship gave place later to a larger painting, which Margaret Mary describes in her letter to Mother de Saumaise. It adorns at present the tomb from whence the relics of the Blessed Margaret Mary were removed in triumph, July 13, 1864. This painting was lost sight of during the Revolution, and was restored to the Monastery of Paray in 1833. It may be interesting to notice the subject. In the centre is the Sacred Heart of our Lord, encircled by rays and a crown of thorns. Above is the Eternal Father, Who holds in one hand the globe, and with the other unfolds a scroll bearing the words: "This is the Heart of My well-beloved Son, in Which I am well pleased." The Holy Ghost hovers in the form of a dove above the

The triumph of the Sacred Heart crowned her joy in a more special manner when, on the 7th of September, 1688, the chapel which had been raised to Its honor within the enclosure by the pious care of the Mother Melin, was blessed with unusual solemnity. A body of the Clergy attached, as members of a Confraternity, to the parish church, to the number of five-and-twenty, accompanied by the Curés of the neighboring parishes, came in procession, and with them were admitted also within the enclosure of the monastery a large number of persons, whom it was found difficult to keep out.

During the two hours that the ceremony lasted, and for an hour afterwards, Blessed Margaret Mary remained kneeling in the chapel, wholly absorbed in God, and motionless. Who shall say what passed in her soul during this time? In part, at least, it may find fitting expression, as her contemporaries remark, in the words in which, as we have seen, she opened the secret of her heart a short time before to the Mother Greyfié: "I shall die happy now that the Heart of my Saviour begins to be known."

Sacred Heart. Below, on the right, kneels our Blessed Lady, who points to the Sacred Heart, with the words: "Love It and It will love you." St. Joseph, holding in one hand the lily, points with the other to the Sacred Heart, saying: "Come, It is open to all." A figure below, in attitude of supplication, and expressive of confidence, utters the words: "I love It, and give myself to It."



CHAPTER XXV.

1678—1690.

WHILST Margaret Mary was securing by her sufferings the final triumph of the Sacred Heart in the Monastery of Paray, she had enkindled and kept alive the fire of the Devotion in several other monasteries of the Order. Her two late Superiors, the Mothers de Saumaise and Greyfié, had carried with them the sacred fire to their respective Monasteries of Moulins and Semur, over which they were called to preside, and it was by the intimate correspondence which Margaret Mary entertained with them that she fanned the flame and spread it still wider, and communicated it to the hearts of many more, both in these and other Communities. It is in these letters of Margaret Mary, in which she lays open the secret depths of her heart, and which she therefore always begged might be destroyed, that we discover as it were in its source that divine fire which burned in her soul, and would gladly have communicated itself to the whole world. Thanks to the wise discretion which Mother de Saumaise allowed

herself to exercise in complying with Margaret Mary's wishes, we are still in possession of a large number of letters addressed to her first Mother Superior. The Mother Greyfié took Margaret Mary more strictly at her word, and hence we are obliged to be satisfied with the more scanty remains which have been preserved of her correspondence with one towards whom she always retained so sincere an affection and regard. In the correspondence with both we recognize the humility and submission of the child, combined with the zeal, frankness, and divine love of the Apostle and Disciple of the Sacred Heart.

Mother de Saumaise, on quitting Paray in 1678, had returned to her own Monastery of Dijon. She was there appointed Mistress of Novices; but at the end of a year she was chosen Mother Superior of the Monastery of Moulins. Owing, however, to the delicacy of her health, she was recalled at the end of her three years' Superiority to her own monastery in 1682. This had been already foretold to her by Margaret Mary. "It is true," she wrote to her in May, 1679, the period of her appointment, "that our Lord has covered your cross with roses, for fear you might shrink from it. It is not this, however, that should give you joy so much as the thorns which are hidden beneath. When they begin to make themselves felt, it

will be then that our Lord will take complacency in you, by giving you a resemblance to Himself, and allowing you to see that He is no less admirable in the bitterness of Calvary than in the sweetness of Thabor." This cross was the burden of Superiority, rendered heavier by habitual infirmities; the roses were the consolation Mother de Saumaise experienced in being the inmate of a House consecrated, as it were, by being the scene of the death of her holy Foundress, and which, after Annecy, retained some of the most cherished traditions for a Daughter of the Visitation. As Mother de Saumaise was destined by our Lord to plant the Devotion to His Sacred Heart in the Community of Moulins, perhaps it was necessary that such fruit should have drawn its first strength from the Cross.

Mother de Saumaise had been the first to commence the correspondence with Margaret Mary soon after her return to Dijon from Paray, unwilling to allow of silence on the part of her former Daughter, who had hitherto made her the depositary of the most intimate secrets of her heart. Margaret Mary assures her in return that our Lord had so closely united their hearts that there was no fear they would be ever separated. "And as I have no terms to express to you," she says, "the gratitude I feel for all your goodness to me as a Mother, it is

enough for me to tell you that I shall retain an everlasting remembrance of it in the presence of our Lord."

Mother de Saumaise, on entering on her charge at Moulins, was not long in communicating to her Community the sentiments she entertained herself towards her former Daughter. Sister Louise Henriette de Soudeilles, the Mistress of Novices, was one of the first to challenge the favor of correspondence with Margaret Mary, and to request to be allowed to enter with her into a mutual participation of spiritual goods. Margaret Mary, in reply, after expressing her sense of the favor she esteemed it to be thus remembered by her, assures her that the only good she possesses is in the Sacred Heart of our Lord, which God has given in His goodness as the treasure of the poor, out of the riches of which they may satisfy their indigence. "It is in this rich treasure that we must share," she says, "by placing in the Sacred Heart all the good we are able to do by His grace, and taking His in exchange to offer to the Eternal Father in place of our own." "It is here," my dear Sister," she continues, "that we must form our partnership and make our retreat. In the Sacred Heart we shall live sheltered from every storm, and in It we will meet and make each others acquaintance." We shall see how intimately they were united in the Sacred Heart

of our Lord, and how this union tended to promote the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Margaret Mary was enabled from her own experience to encourage Mother de Saumaise amidst the difficulties which she knew would attend her endeavors to promote the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. "Do not be surprised, my dear Mother," she writes, "at all the contradictions you will meet with in establishing the reign of this loving Heart. I entreat of you with all the affection of my heart not to desist from this holy enterprise."

Mother de Saumaise had already succeeded in sowing the seeds of the Devotion at Moulins, when she was recalled, as we have said, at the end of three years, in the summer of 1678, to her own Monastery of Dijon. She handed over her charge, together with the agreeable task of promoting the Devotion to Mother Louise Henriette de Soudeilles. Mother de Soudeilles wrote shortly after her election to Margaret Mary, who replied to her with great frankness, and took occasion to turn her thoughts to the Sacred Heart under the burden of her new charge. "It is true, my dear Mother," she writes, "that your obligation is very great; the weight of it can be lightened only by Him Who has promised to make His burden light." "The title of Mother Superior," she says, "seems to me to represent nothing else than a living image of

Jesus Christ. When He raises any one to **this** dignity, He would have them divest themselves of all self-interest, regarding in everything only His greater glory, loving only with the love of His Sacred Heart, acting only in His spirit, allowing Him to live, reign, and act Himself." Checking herself, however, "Pardon me, my dear Mother," she says, "for my too great liberty. It is the fear of this, indeed, which always makes me most disinclined to write." It would seem, indeed, that Mother de Soudeilles had been thrown into some uneasiness in consequence of counsels given her by Margaret Mary in some of her letters. For, writing to her in November, 1682, Margaret Mary begs of her to take no notice of what she had written to her. "For I put down," she says, "without thought or consideration, whatever comes into my mind. Give yourself no more trouble about it, my dear Mother ; I assure you that our Lord is satisfied with the good-will of your heart " Margaret Mary's explanation had the effect she desired, for we find her writing later—"I am extremely confused that your charity should find consolation in our letters. It is our Lord Himself Who gives it you."

At Dijon, whither, as we have seen, Mother de Saumaise returned in July, 1682, the venerated Mother Superior, Mother Anne Séraphine

Boulrier,* dying in September was succeeded by the Mother Mary Dorothy Desbarres. Margaret Mary continued to urge strongly upon Mother de Saumaise at Dijon, as at Moulins, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. "It seems to me, my dear Mother," she writes to her in August, 1684, "that you would greatly please the Sacred Heart of our Lord by making an entire sacrifice of your heart to Him on some Friday after Holy Communion, in order to testify to Him that you no longer wish to make any use of it except for His pure love by procuring Him all the honor and glory in your power. I say no more to you about it because I think you have already done so ; but it will give Him singular pleasure if you frequently renew it, and practice it faithfully in order to complete your crown. If you only knew what merit and glory there is in honoring the amiable Heart of the Adorable Jesus, and what a recompense He will give to those who consecrate themselves to It and seek to honor It ! It seems to me that this single intention will give more merit to their actions in the sight of God than all else they could do without it."

* It was Mother Anne Séraphine Boulrier, it will be remembered, who was consulted by Mother de Saumaise, and assured by her of the divine character of the extraordinary graces received by Margaret Mary at the beginning of her religious life.

She urges a similar consecration of herself upon Mother de Soudeilles, and expresses to her the idea she has formed of the perfection which the Sacred Heart expects of her ; that she should will nothing except with Its will, love nothing except with Its affections, do nothing except with the light It gives her, and undertake nothing without first asking counsel and support from It ; giving It the glory of all, returning It thanks in the ill as well as the good success of her undertakings, remaining always contented without troubling herself about anything.

The Mother Greyfié, on quitting Paray at the end of her six years' Superiority, in May, 1684, was elected, as we have mentioned, Mother Superior of the Monastery of Semur, near Auxerre. It was on her arrival here that Margaret Mary soon opened an intimate correspondence with her. Enough of this correspondence remains to show how ardently Margaret Mary pressed upon her late Mother Superior the claims of the Sacred Heart, and the efficacy of her appeals. ' If you only knew, my good Mother," she wrote to her in 1685 ; " how strongly urged I feel to love the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ ! It seems to me that I live but for this." She then communicates to her, as we have already seen, the promises made by our Blessed Lord in favor of those who practice the Devotion to

His Sacred Heart. What an effect was produced on the Mother Greyfié by this letter, together with the intelligence of the recent inauguration of the Devotion by the Novices on the Feast of St. Margaret, we have already had occasion to notice. The Devotion was taken up at once by the Community of Semur. The erection of an oratory adorned with a painting of the Sacred Heart, and the public celebration of the day appointed by our Lord for the Feast, served to show the alacrity with which they gave themselves up to it. The miniature of the Sacred Heart sent by the Mother Greyfié to Margaret Mary, and her present of pictures to the Novices, testified her cordial sympathy. All combined to give the greatest joy to Margaret Mary. "I cannot tell you the consolation you have given me," she writes, "both in sending me the painting of the Sacred Heart, and also in being so willing to honor It with all your Community."

Perhaps it was the communication of these same promises by Margaret Mary to Mother de Saumaise, and the account of the blessings attached to the representation of the Sacred Heart, that inspired her also with the desire of having a painting of the Sacred Heart executed. On her making known this desire to Margaret Mary, she not only encouraged her in it, but urged her also to have a plate executed which

might serve for an engraving of the Sacred Heart, so that copies might be multiplied, and those who wished to honor the Sacred Heart might have an opportunity of placing the picture in their houses, or wearing it in a smaller form about them. She tells her that she thinks our Lord designs her to be the first to procure Him this honor, "For you were the first," she says, "to whom it was His will that I should make known the ardent desire He had of being known, loved, and glorified by His creatures." "It seems to me," she adds, "that you would receive a richer recompense for this than for anything you have ever done in your life."* In this same letter she com-

* What importance Blessed Margaret Mary attached to the circulation of pictures of the Sacred Heart we may judge from the earnestness with which she recurs to the subject in her letters, and from the manner in which she expresses herself on the subject. One of the Fathers of the Society had undertaken to get the above-mentioned plate made, but was prevented, by being employed by the Bishop of Autun in laboring for the conversion of the Calvinists in Paray. Margaret Mary, in writing to Mother de Saumaise, tells her that she has reason to think that if the good Father had first executed what he had promised to the Sacred Heart, he would have converted and changed the hearts of the Calvinists, so greatly would the Sacred Heart have been pleased with **what** he had done; but that, since he has given the

municates to Mother de Saumaise the instruction which she had received from her holy Founder on the day of his Feast (Jan. 29, 1686,) of which we have already spoken, regarding the importance of this Devotion to the security and well-being of his Order. She makes the same communication to the Mother Greyfié at the close of June, 1686, at the same time that she communicates to her her joy at the marvellous change in the Community of Paray, and the triumph of the Devotion on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of that year. Our Lord wishes her, she says, in praying for the Community of Semur, to speak of it no otherwise than as the well-beloved Community of His Heart. He takes such pleasure, she adds, in the honor He receives from it that it makes Him forget all the bitterness He finds elsewhere.*

preference to something else, even though to His glory, his labors will not be attended with much fruit.

* Margaret Mary recommends to the Mother Greyfié, as a practice of the Devotion, the allotment of certain offices among the Community, such as that of Mediatrix, Reparatrix, &c. In this we recognize the first suggestion of what has since become a familiar practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart. The Mediatrix was to beg of the Eternal Father that the Sacred Heart might be better known, of the Holy Ghost that It might be more loved, and of the Blessed Virgin that she would employ her credit in order that all who addressed

We have an opportunity of observing, in a letter which Margaret Mary wrote about this time to Mother de Soudeilles, the manner in which she introduces the subject of the Devotion to one who apparently as yet was but imperfectly acquainted with its distinctive character.

"I do not know, my dear Mother," she says, "whether you understand what the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ is, about which I spoke to you, and which produces great fruit, and a striking change in all who consecrate and give themselves to it with fervor. I desire ardently that your Community should be among these." "We have found this Devotion," she remarks, with her characteristic modesty, "in the book of the Retreat of Father de La Colombière, who is venerated as a Saint. I do not know if you are acquainted with it ; it would give me great pleasure to send you a copy of it."

A few months later, accordingly, Margaret Mary sent her a copy of the book, together with two pictures of the Sacred Heart, the larger one, she tells her, to be placed at the foot of her crucifix or elsewhere, in order to pay it honor, the smaller one to wear near her themselves to It might experience Its power. The Reparatrix was to beg pardon of God for all the injuries done to the Sacred Heart in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar.

heart.* She sends her also an act of consecration to the Sacred Heart. "I do this," she says, "because I think that this Divine Heart wishes to be absolute Master of yours in order that you may procure It to be honored, loved, and glorified in your Community."

"You cannot think," she says, "what good effects this Devotion produces in souls which have the happiness of being acquainted with It, through the means of that holy man, Father de La Colombière, who was himself wholly consecrated to the Sacred Heart, and lived only to procure Its being loved, honored, and glorified.

* This interesting miniature, a fac-simile of which had been sent to Mother de Saumaise, is in the keeping of the Monastery of Nevers, which has inherited the traditions and pious relics of the Monastery of Moulins. In the centre is the Sacred Heart encircled with jets of flame, pierced with three nails, and surmounted by the Cross. In the open Wound of the Sacred Heart is read the word "Charitas" in letters of gold. Encircling the Sacred Heart are two crowns, the inner one formed of interlacing knots, called, in the language of the time, *lacs d'amour*, the outer one a crown of thorns. Hearts are represented entangled, as it were, severally in these two encircling crowns. "Those within the crown of thorns around the Sacred Heart," is Margaret Mary's own description to Mother de Soudeilles, "are hearts which love and follow It by suffering, those in the knots (*lacs d'arnour*) are such as love It with a love of joy."

It was this, I think, which raised him to such a height of perfection in so short a time."

Amongst those whom the Devotion to the Sacred Heart had inspired with fervor in its cause was Sister Jane Magdalen Joly, of the Monastery of Dijon. She felt a great desire to compose a little work with a view to promote the Devotion. On her communicating this desire to Margaret Mary, "Your letter, my dear Sister," was Margaret Mary's reply, "confirms me still more in regarding you as one of the true friends of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He knows those whom He has destined specially to establish His reign. I think that you are of the number."*

Sister Jane Magdalen Joly was employed in promoting the Devotion not only by writing. The drawing, which had been so long looked for as a preparation for the plate and engraving of the Sacred Heart, proving unsatisfactory, Sister Jane Magdalen was desired, in 1687, by her Mother Superior, Mother Mary Dorothy Desbarres, to prepare a drawing according to

*The publication of the little work by Sister Jane Magdalen Joly, at Dijon, suggested to Mother de Soudeilles to publish, a few months later, a somewhat similar work at Moulins. It contained some account of the origin of the Devotion, some of the details of which occasioned Margaret Mary, according to her own expression, "terrible confusion."

the suggestions of Blessed Margaret Mary. The good Sister obeyed with simplicity, and, though she had never had any instruction in drawing, the attempt was so successful that the artist to whom it was sent found nothing to correct in it. "I cannot express to you my joy," writes Margaret Mary, to whom the sketch had been sent, "on receiving your drawing, which is just what I wished. The consolation I feel at the ardor you manifest in the service of the Sacred Heart is beyond all expression."

"I believe," says Margaret Mary, writing of this good Sister in the following year to Mother de Saumaise, "that she has given more pleasure to our Lord by what she has done in His honor than by anything she ever did in all her life, and I think the Sacred Heart will make her an everlasting memorial of His mercies."

Notwithstanding the repugnance Margaret Mary felt to writing she could not refuse to comply with the desire of Sister Félice Madeleine de La Barge, of the Community of Moulins to enter into a correspondence based on the strong devotion she entertained to the Sacred Heart. "You could not, my dear Sister," writes Margaret Mary, in 1686, "engage me to a closer union with your charity than by loving the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ." In her letters to Sister de La Barge, Margaret Mary treats her much as she might

treat one of her own Novices, and hence we are presented in the correspondence with most valuable spiritual instruction.

She tells her that our Lord wishes to establish His reign in her heart by first banishing all creatures from it, and then herself. To this end she recommends her to rejoice on any occasion when she is overlooked or despised, yet not to seek such occasions nor refuse them, but to profit by them; to unite herself to the intentions of the Sacred Heart, to love with Its love and will with Its will, and to choose It for her oratory wherein to offer up her prayers. She tells her that our Lord specially looks for self-abandonment and confidence from her. "Think often," she says, "that a child cannot perish in the hands of an all-powerful Father."

"You should put away far from you," she tells her again, "all trouble and uneasiness, for our Lord does not make His abode, except in peace, in a soul which desires to see itself destroyed and annihilated in order to remain lost, as it were, in the love of its own abjection."

Sister de La Barge had asked her to which of the mysteries in the Passion of our Lord she felt most attraction. She tells her that it is the Crucifixion, and that she took a pleasure in standing at the foot of the Cross with the Blessed Virgin, in order to unite herself to all

that our dear Lord had done for us. "But in fine, my dear friend," she says, "we must always take our place in His Adorable Heart and never quit It, happen what may. It is a strong and secure place of refuge."

"As regards entering into His Sacred Heart, go; what have you to fear, since He Himself invites you to enter and to take your repose there? Is It not the throne of mercy, at which the most wretched are the best received, provided love presents them in the abyss of their misery? If we are pusillanimous, cold, imperfect, is It not a burning furnace, in which we can perfect and purify ourselves like gold in the crucible, to become a loving sacrifice, immolated and sacrificed to His adorable designs? Abandon yourself without reserve to His loving providence. Leave yourself, and you will find all. Forget yourself, and He will think of you. Lose yourself in the abyss of your own nothingness, and you will possess Him. But what is to enable you to do all this? The love that you will find in the Sacred Heart, in Which you must not only endeavor to make your retreat, but you must also take It as your guide and principal director, in order that He may teach you what He wishes of you, and give you strength to accomplish it perfectly."

Margaret Mary continued to encourage Mother de Saumaise in her endeavors to promote

the Devotion. "It seems to me," she says, "that He finds His delight in your Community, and is ready to shed upon it the profusion of His love with an abundance of saving and sanctifying graces." She communicates to her also two consoling assurances she had received in her favor. She had recommended her, together with her Mother Superior, Mary Dorothy Desbarres, and her Confessor, M. Charollais, to the Sacred Heart of our Lord at Holy Communion. She heard in reply, she says, the following words; "Yes, I receive them forever in the unity of My love." Another time, our Lord showed her, she says, that He would make a crown of twelve of His best-beloved who had procured Him the greatest glory upon earth, and that He would place them as twelve stars around His Sacred Heart. "It seems to me," she says, "that the same three were of this happy number."

A few months later, she communicates to her a remarkable Vision with which she had been recently favored, on the Feast of the Visitation, July 2d, 1688, and by which she was given to understand the intimate connection of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart with the spirit of the Order, the mission of the Daughters of the Visitation to communicate it to all, and of the Society of Jesus to make its value known.

She had been allowed to pass the whole day

before the Blessed Sacrament. She beheld the Sacred Heart of our Lord as on a throne of flames. From the Wound in It issued such bright and burning rays that the whole place seemed lighted and warmed with them. The Blessed Virgin was on one side, and on the other St. Francis of Sales and Father de La Colombière. The Daughters of the Visitation seemed to be there, their Angel Guardians by their side. The Blessed Virgin invited her Daughters to approach, for that she wished to make them depositaries of a precious treasure. "Behold," she said, pointing to the Sacred Heart, "the divine treasure which is especially manifested to you through the tender love which my Son has for your Institute." "You are not to enrich yourselves only," she added, "with this inexhaustible treasure, but you are to distribute it freely, endeavoring to enrich all with it, without fear of its failing, for the more you take the more will there still be to take."

"And you too, faithful servant of my Son," she said, turning to Father de La Colombière "you have a large share in this precious treasure; for if it is given to the Daughters of the Visitation to make it known and loved, it is reserved to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus to make known its utility and value, in order that all may profit by it, receiving it with the respect and gratitude due to so great a benefit.

And in proportion as they shall do this, the Divine Heart will shed Its blessings and graces in such abundance on the functions of their ministry that they will produce fruit beyond their labors and their hopes, and, at the same time, in particular for their own salvation and perfection."

St. Francis of Sales then invited his Daughters to come and draw the waters of salvation from that source from whence their Constitutions themselves had taken their rise. "It is in this Divine Heart," he said, "that you will find a means of acquitting yourselves perfectly of what is enjoined you in the first article of your Directory, which contains in substance the whole perfection of your Institute—'Let the object of their whole life, and of all their exercises, be to unite themselves with God.'

"To attain this, the Sacred Heart must be the life which animates us, and the love of It our constant exercise; for this alone can unite us to God in order to aid the holy Church by our prayers and good example, and to advance the salvation of our neighbor."

To the same effect is what she writes to Mother de Saumaise on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, 1689. "Our Lord showed me," she says, "the Devotion to the Sacred Heart as a beautiful tree, which He had destined from all eternity to take root in our Institute and to

spread its branches through all its Houses, in order that each might gather its fruits according to their will and taste. These fruits are to renew in us the primitive spirit of our vocation."

"Our good Father de La Colombière," she adds, "has procured that the holy Society of Jesus shall be favored after our Institute with all the graces and special privileges of the Sacred Heart of our Lord. He promises that He will shed His blessings in abundance and profusion on their labors of holy charity in which they are engaged for the salvation of souls. This Divine Heart, it seems to me, has so ardent a desire to be known, loved, and adored, especially by these good Fathers, that He promises them, if I am not mistaken, so to shed the unction of His ardent charity on their words, with such strong and powerful graces, that they will be like two-edged swords to penetrate the hardest hearts of the most obdurate sinners. But to this end, they must endeavor to draw all their lights from this inexhaustible source of the science and charity of the Saints."

Writing to Mother de Saumaise, shortly after the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, 1688, she recalls the memory of the singular favor she had received on the same Feast in 1674, of which mention has been already made. "I thought I should melt, as it were, with shame and confusion," she says, "when on the day of the Feast

of the Beloved Disciple of our Beloved, I called to mind how on this same day the Divine Spouse conferred upon me the incomprehensible grace of allowing me to repose upon His Heart with His Beloved Disciple, and giving me His Heart."

The Mother Marie Félice Dubuysson had succeeded Mother Louise Henriette de Soudeilles, in August, 1688, as Mother Superior of Moulins. Margaret Mary, in writing to Moulins at the time, had presented her affectionate respects to the new Mother Superior, who on her part gladly availed herself of the opportunity to enter upon a correspondence which she valued so highly, and Margaret Mary, in spite of her general repugnance to writing, could not refuse this new appeal, and did not fail, as opportunity offered, to urge the claims of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. "Spare no pains," she writes to Mother Dubuysson, "to procure Its being loved, honored, and glorified, for this is the most effectual means of gaining His friendship and drawing down upon yourself and all your Community the abundance of His sanctifying graces and the reign of His ardent charity, the unction of which He will shed upon your hearts by the purity of His holy love." The Mother Dubuysson having asked her for a prayer which she might use to testify her love to the Sacred Heart, "For my part," replies Margaret Mary, "I know no better than this very love itself,

for where there is love all is eloquent, and even the greatest occupations are proofs of our love."

In March, 1687, Margaret Mary had written to Mother de Saumaise, expressing her sympathy with the petition which had been addressed to Rome from Dijon to obtain approbation for the Feast, the Mass, and the Office of the Sacred Heart. The answer returned from Rome was, that the Devotion should first be publicly established in the diocese with the approbation of the Ordinary, and that when it had existed there for some time, then the necessary sanction might be obtained for its confirmation. This answer, which might be regarded in one sense as an approbation, was felt as a severe disappointment by the ardent friends of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. Margaret Mary, though she felt it deeply herself, wrote to Mother de Saumaise, in August, 1688, to console her, and expressed to her what it was that had enabled her to bear the intelligence herself, which, as she said, had pierced her heart like a sword. "As I prostrated myself," she said, "before a picture of the Sacred Heart to make my complaint, I received the following reply—'Why do you grieve at an event which will turn to My greater glory? At present, men are led to love and honor Me without any other support than love itself, and this greatly pleases Me. But this ardor may grow cool; and this My

Divine Heart would feel most deeply, for being pure love It could not bear it. Then will I rekindle this fire in all hearts by means of these and still greater privileges, nor will I leave uncompensated the pains that are taken to that end. Remain, then, in peace.' "This," she says, "is what I have done since."

Margaret Mary, in the meantime, expresses to the different Sisters with whom she is in correspondence the joy which she feels at the rapid progress which the Devotion is making in different directions.

"It is a great pleasure," she wrote to Mother de Saumaise, in 1688, "to see the progress the Devotion to the Sacred Heart is making here. It is, my dear Mother, through your means. Do not, then, be discouraged, for it seems to me that He wishes you to make it your only business, for it is this principally which will form your crown."

She writes to Sister de La Barge, in 1689, and acquaints her with the eagerness with which the Devotion was taken up at Lyons. She had sent one of the books published at Dijon to a friend at Lyons. She had shown it to a young Father of the Society* in that city. His scholars, on his showing it them, finding that they could

* Perhaps Father John Croiset, S.J., who was at this time Professor at the College of the Society in Lyons.

not multiply the written copies sufficiently to satisfy their wishes, determined on having it printed at their own expense. A well-known publisher of Lyons, on being applied to to get it printed, was himself so much struck with the Devotion that he insisted on undertaking the publication free of expense. Father Croiset was asked to make some additions to the little work, which he did ; and no sooner was it in print than the first edition was soon exhausted, and within two months even a third was called for.

Writing to Sister Jane Magdalen Joly, at Dijon, "You cannot believe," writes Margaret Mary, "how the Devotion increases, and spreads graces and blessings on every side. There are Curés in the villages who have established it in their parishes as soon as they became acquainted with it ; and even persons of great piety and learning, after being strongly opposed to it, preach it in public, and show that nothing is more salutary or holy."

"You never saw anything like the ardor," she writes, a little later, to Mother de Saumaise, "with which the Devotion spreads through the hearts of men."

She describes to Mother Dubuysson, in October, 1689, the progress which the Devotion is making at Marseilles. Here more than a thousand copies of the book printed at Lyons had been sold ; and of the twenty-seven Re-

ligious Houses in the city, there is not one, she says, that has not received the Devotion with enthusiasm. The same little book, she tells her, had found its way into Poland, through the means of the Mother Superior of Lyons, and it was also on the point of being translated into Italian.

The date of the last letter written by Blessed Margaret Mary to her Sisters, or of the last at least to which a certain date can be assigned, was the 27th of May, 1690. In this letter, addressed to Sister de La Barge, at Moulins, she consents to write to her once a year, in spite of the determination she had previously expressed to cease writing altogether. She gives her the following concluding counsel—to have recourse in all things to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and to endeavor to maintain the closest union with It.

“As regards the trouble you feel,” she says again, “in leading a languishing life in the service of God, what He seems to suggest to me to say to you is, that you should not make yourself uneasy, but, in order to satisfy Him in this respect, all you have to do is to unite yourself in all your actions to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, at the beginning to animate your intention and at the end to satisfy for your defects. For example, if you find you cannot pray as you would wish, be satisfied with offering the prayer

which our Lord is offering for us in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, and present His ardent prayer to satisfy for your tepidity. Say in each of your actions: 'My God, I wish to do or suffer this in the Sacred Heart of Thy Divine Son, and according to His holy intentions, which I offer to Thee in reparation for all that is faulty or imperfect in mine,' and so of the rest. When you meet with any trouble, affliction, or mortification, say to yourself: 'I will take what the Sacred Heart of our Lord sends me in order to unite me more closely to Him.' Endeavor especially to preserve peace of heart; the way to secure this is no longer to have any will, but to take that of the Sacred Heart in place of our own. In a word, this loving Heart will supply for all that is wanting on your part, for It will love God for you, and you will love Him in It and by It."

It was thus that Blessed Margaret Mary endeavored to enkindle and keep alive the fire of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart in the several monasteries with which she was in correspondence. During the few remaining months which ushered in her death she was to lead in silence a life truly "hidden with Christ in God." All desires were now, as it were, extinct in her soul; she enjoyed a profound peace, which was even capable, from its very depth, of creating a scruple within her. "I acknowledge to you," is her

avowal to her former Director, Father Rolin, in her last letter to him, "that I can no longer wish or desire anything in this world, though I see clearly that, in point of virtue, all is wanting to me. I should wish sometimes to grieve for this, but I cannot, for it is no longer in my power, so to say, to act. I feel only a perfect acquiescence in the good pleasure of God, and an ineffable pleasure in suffering. The thought that consoles me from time to time is that the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ will do all for me if I allow It ; It will will, love, and **desire** for me, and will supply for all my defects."





CHAPTER XXVI.

1687—1690.

AMONGST the letters written by Margaret Mary in furtherance of the claims of the Sacred Heart, we find several addressed to her two brothers, Chrysostom and James. They alone remained alive, of the various members of her family, to claim that natural affection which was so strong within her, and which her Religious Profession had served to raise to the higher order of divine charity. Her mother had died in 1676, five years after her entrance into Paray on the 25th of May, 1671. Chrysostom and James strengthened the bond of family ties by a mutual regard; and whilst Chrysostom, who had followed his father's profession of the law, became perpetual Mayor of Bois-Sainte-Marie, James, who was called to the ecclesiastical life, was Curé of the same place. They both entertained great veneration and regard for their sister, and experienced in return the happy influence of her counsels and example. Hence they were led to embrace with ardor the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, and combined, as

we shall see, to found a chapel at Bois-Sainte-Marie dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

A severe illness, with which her brother the Curé was attacked in 1687, presented Margaret Mary with an opportunity of manifesting her influence with the Sacred Heart of our Lord in his favor, and through the assistance she rendered him in his temporal health, of inspiring him with a devotion to the Sacred Heart. He had been suddenly struck with an attack of apoplexy ; all the resources of medical men had been exhausted in vain, and the doctors declared the case desperate. Chrysostom, however, had confidence in his holy sister, and sent to beg the aid of her prayers. Margaret Mary wished that the cure should come from the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and begged of Him to act as the Physician Himself. She gave the bearer of the message three billets, on each of which she had written a short invocation to the Sacred Heart, desiring that her brother should be given water to drink in which these billets had been dipped.* Her brother had no sooner taken a

* Margaret Mary writes to Mother de Saumaise in 1689 : “This loving Heart has a great desire to be known and loved by His creatures. It is on this account that He would have them address themselves to Him with great confidence. Many persons have been cured by the following means : The sick person is given water to drink in which have been dipped five billets, inscribed

spoonful of the water than he was at once cured, and the doctors were greatly surprised on revisiting him to find him in perfect health.

Blessed Margaret Mary availed herself of the opportunity to instil the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, to which her brother felt already that he owed so much, and urged upon him some counsels which would lead him more effectually to adopt it.

“It is a great consolation, my dear brother,” she writes to him on the 22d of January, 1687, “that the goodness of the Sacred Heart of our Lord has been pleased to accede to our wishes, and to allow us to keep you still a little longer here in this place of misery and tears, where we must indeed acknowledge that all is vanity and affliction of spirit, except loving and serving God alone. This I promised Him you would do, if He still allowed you a longer time to live. For you must know, my dear brother, that I have made many promises to the Sacred Heart of our Lord in order to obtain this for you.”

She then specifies some points which he should attend to in order to attain that perfection which his state demands, and suggests to him to consecrate himself to the Sacred Heart, in order to give and procure for It all on one side, “May the Sacred Heart of Jesus cure you,” and on the other, “Praised be the most pure and Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

the love, honor, and glory in his power. "I think I have already spoken to you," she adds, "concerning this Devotion, which has been quite recently established. It seems to me that there is not a shorter path for arriving at perfection, or a surer means of salvation, than by being consecrated to this Divine Heart. It is to this, too, that I have engaged you. Love It, then, if you would have me love you, for I can only love what It loves." "Pardon me, my dear brother," she concludes, "for saying all this; it comes from a heart which loves you, and desires ardently that you should be a Saint."

"You have so entirely gained my heart," she writes to him a few months later, "by the manner in which you have opened yours to me, that it seems to me there is nothing I would not do to advance you in the holy love of God."

"I cannot express to you," she continues, "the joy which I feel at the change which has lately taken place in you, for I think that our Lord is beginning to be pleased with you. I beg of Him with all my heart to accomplish what He has begun in you, and to grant you holy perseverance." "I speak to you, perhaps, too freely," she adds, "but take it as coming from my tender affection for you. I should be less warmly interested in your real good if I loved you less. I cannot act otherwise towards you, for I look upon you as even more than a second

self. Remember to aid me with your holy Sacrifices, on which I count greatly. Continue this charity towards me, for on this I found my hope."

Her brother Chrysostom having proposed of his own accord to build a chapel at Bois-Sainte-Marie in honor of the Sacred Heart, Margaret Mary writes to him in 1687—"You could not confer a greater favor on me, my dear brother, than by giving me such happy intelligence regarding the good sentiments the Sacred Heart preserves in your heart. I had not ventured to say anything more to you on the subject, for devotions are never solid unless they come from the movement of divine grace. But you must now execute without fail what you have proposed. By doing this you will be giving me one of the greatest consolations I can receive in this mortal life, for nothing can give me such joy as to see the Sacred Heart of our Lord loved, honored, and glorified. I hope that my brother the Priest will not refuse to contribute to the best of his power towards a design so greatly to the glory of the Sacred Heart, and one which will draw down upon you and your family many graces."

"You say nothing," she writes shortly after to her brother the Curé, "of the foundation of which my brother spoke to me. You cannot think what pleasure you give me by your zeal for the glory of the Sacred Heart. It is, I

think, one of the shortest ways of securing our sanctification."

The urgent appeals of Blessed Margaret Mary were not without effect. The Curé of Bois-Sainte-Marie established permanently in his parish the practice of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. The chapel was commenced, and the good Priest founded Masses to be said in it, and waited only for the time when he might have an opportunity of offering the Holy Sacrifice himself in the new chapel. Blessed Margaret Mary writes to him to express her joy at all she had heard.* "I now see that your

* Margaret Mary communicated also to Mother de Saumaise the joy she felt on this occasion. "It is my brother the mayor," she writes, "who is building the chapel at Bois-Sainte-Marie, of which I spoke to you. He has also ordered a picture like ours, which he intends to place in it. My brother the Priest is also founding a Mass in perpetuity, to be said on every Friday in the year, and to be sung solemnly every first Friday of the month. I tell you this, in order that you may thank the Sacred Heart, Which has inspired them to do this; for I did not speak to them about it, though I should have been very glad to do so, for I much prefer that it should come from themselves. You cannot believe what a change the Sacred Heart has made in the family. They have assured me that they would be ready to give the last drop of their blood to support and advance this holy Devotion."

friendship towards me is genuine, for you give me such proofs as I desired. I see in this, as it seems to me, a strong proof that the Sacred Heart wishes to detach your heart entirely from earthly objects and to make you a Saint. I do not ask you, my dear brother," she says, "to practice great austerities, but a generous mortification of your passions and inclinations; to detach your heart from earthly things; to regard God in all that you do, seeking only to please Him and attributing the glory of all to Him, without troubling yourself to acquire any esteem or reputation amongst creatures."

The influence of the prayers of Blessed Margaret Mary, and the truth of her predictions, was experienced in a remarkable manner by her family in the case of Angélique Aumônier, wife of her brother Chrysostom.

Upon her expressing a great desire to visit Blessed Margaret Mary, her husband took her with him to Paray. On their admission, however, into the Parlor, Chrysostom was surprised and mortified to find that his wife was silent, appearing unable to speak from her tears. Upon this he quitted the room, leaving her alone with his sister. On his return at the end of half an hour he found her more calm, and they both took leave of Margaret Mary together. Finding his wife, however, still silent, Chrysostom returned to his sister, and expressed his regret that his

wife should have acted as she had done. "For my part," replied Margaret Mary, "I am well pleased, for these are good tears which she has been shedding." She then told him, under secrecy, that Angélique, on her inquiring from her the cause of her tears, had begged of her to ask of God her salvation, cost what it might. "Have you considered the matter well?" asked Margaret Mary. On her replying in the affirmative, "I will ask of God your salvation," said Margaret Mary, "with as much fervor as I would my own, but God has shown me that it will cost you dear." "No matter," replied Angélique Aumônier, "I submit myself entirely to the will of God, to do with me as He pleases."

"You must have patience, therefore, both of you," remarked Margaret Mary to her brother, "and beg this grace of God. Her submission and yours, my dear brother, will put an end to all."

Two days after their return to Bois-Sainte-Marie, Angélique Aumônier was seized with a violent pain in the face, so that she could not refrain from crying out from excess of pain. All the medical men of the neighborhood tried their skill and every remedy in vain. Hearing of a physician in Lyons who had wrought some extraordinary cures, they went to visit him, but he gave up the case, saying that it was beyond the knowledge of doctors. All the most eminent

physicians and surgeons of Lyons were called in and held a consultation together. They professed themselves unable to understand the case or to do anything in it. The only reply given by the leading physician present to the surprise expressed by Madame Alacoque was : "Madam, we do not lay claim to more than human power upon earth."

Chrysostom began now to open his eyes to the true solution of the enigma which had perplexed him in his sister's words. He visited several Religious Houses in order to obtain their prayers, and, amongst others, the Monastery of the Visitation of Bellecour, in Lyons, to fulfill a vow which he had made to the heart of St. Francis of Sales. He visited also the College of the Society of Jesus in Lyons. The Superior, Father Billet, was a native of Paray. His niece, Sister Claude Marguerite Billet, had been a Novice of Blessed Margaret Mary, and was favored by her with special marks of confidence ; his nephew was physician to the Monastery of Paray. Father Croiset, who was at this time residing at this College, frequently visited Madame Alacoque, and the happy influence which he exercised over her was so great that he led her to resign herself with complete submission to the will of God.

On their return to Bois-Sainte-Marie, on Chrysostom sending word to Blessed Margaret Mary,

she replied that as soon as she was quite resigned her ills would cease. Angélique Aumônier, on hearing the letter read, made an act of entire resignation to the will of God, and died on the following day. She was buried in the family vault at Bois-Sainte-Marie, beneath the recently-completed chapel of the Sacred Heart.





CHAPTER XXVII.

1687—1690.

MARGARET MARY, on quitting the office of Mistress of Novices at the beginning of 1687, had been again appointed assistant in the Infirmary to Sister Catherine Augustine Marest, and afterwards was again placed in charge of the children, or "Little Sisters." In either position she had abundant opportunity of meeting with that humiliation and mortification which bore a precious value in her eyes from the resemblance it gave her to our Blessed Lord.

She suffered at the same time great pain from gatherings in her fingers, which necessitated severe incisions to the bone.* Such was the patience with which she bore the treatment, that the surgeon could not refrain from remarking with a smile, that "she bade fair to be a Saint." She was still jealous, however, of the consolation in which she thought nature found its account in the compassion expressed for her.

* "I owe to the intercession of Father de La Colombière," she writes to Mother de Saumaise, June 6, 1688, "the cure of a finger on which I had a gathering of the same kind as that which was opened last year with a knife in several places."

"It cannot be content," she says, writing to the Mother Greyfié, "to suffer without relief amidst humiliation, contempt, and abandonment on the part of creatures. Yet it is this which pure love demands, and, short of it, suffering does not deserve the name."

Our Lord, however, consoled her with His choicest graces. On Good Friday, as she was complaining that she could not receive Him in Holy Communion, presenting Himself to her He said, "Your desire, My Daughter, has so deeply penetrated My Heart that, if I had not instituted this Sacrament of Love, I would do so now in order to make Myself your food."

We may see, in the words which our Lord uttered to her on another occasion, the source of that wonderful humility which He imprinted on her soul, and which enabled Him, so to say, to communicate Himself so freely to her. "I will render you," our Lord said to her, "so poor, vile, and abject in your own eyes, I will so annihilate you in the thought of your own heart, that I may be able to build upon your nothing."

The Community appreciated the treasure they possessed in Margaret Mary, and named her a second time Assistant.* She manifested in this

* This was on the re-election of Mother Marie Christine Melin, in May, 1687. Margaret Mary used every effort to escape this honorable charge, as she writes to her intimate friend Sister Félice Madeleine de La Barge.

office all that zeal and regularity which distinguished her, animated by a deep veneration and regard for everything that came from the holy Founders.

So great was the esteem entertained for her virtue that she met with but few exterior occasions of suffering. The interior sufferings, however, which the sanctity of divine justice led her to endure for others, and especially for her "suffering friends" (as she called the souls in Purgatory), were so great that they reduced her in a manner to the last extremity. "It seems," she wrote to Father Rolin, "that I suffer in so strange a manner that I declare to you that if His infinite mercy did not strengthen me in proportion as His justice makes me feel the weight of His severity, it would be impossible for me to bear it for a moment. All this, however, is attended with unalterable peace."

The devil also, who had threatened never to leave her alone, finding that he could not destroy her, tried every means to persecute her.*

"As regards my office, you cannot think," she says, "how I felt my own weakness, owing to the want of submission I showed. I played so many parts in hopes of escaping the office I now hold, but all to no purpose."

* The Sisters Claude Marguerite Billet, Marie Rosalie de Lyonne, and Françoise Angélique de Damas deposed

On the Feast of her holy Founder this year, as she was begging for special graces for the Order, she was told by him that a true Daughter of the Visitation should be a living sacrifice, in imitation of Jesus Christ, receiving afflictions as they come, without having any regard to herself, in order to destroy those false lights which lead us only on the way to ruin. Those who did not maintain this disposition were not counted, he said, amongst his true Daughters.

As she made a similar petition on the day of the Visitation, our Lord seemed to turn a deaf ear to her entreaties. "They do not listen to My voice," He said, "and they destroy the foundation of the building. If they think to raise it on a strange foundation I will overthrow it." Our Blessed Lady upon this interceded for her Daughters. "They are the Daughters of my Heart," she said; "I will be a mantle of protection to them, to receive the blows Thou wouldst inflict on them." "My Mother," replied our Lord, "thou hast all power to bestow My graces upon them at will." Our Blessed Lady begged delay until the Feast of her Presentation, and promised to spare no pains to make the

in the juridicial process that they had repeatedly seen her chair drawn suddenly away from under her, as Margaret Mary was seated by the fire. On one of them remarking to her that the devil must have something to do with it, she replied only by a smile, and resumed her seat.

graces of her Son victorious, to destroy the claims of Satan, and to establish them in that spirit of humility and simplicity which, said our Lord, "should keep the Daughters of the Visitation hidden in Me, Who am their crucified Love."

On several occasions after, Margaret Mary saw our Blessed Lady wearied, as it were, with her efforts to rescue the hearts of her Daughters from the hands of Satan, and to present them to her Divine Son.

The whole of the following year, 1688, was passed by Margaret Mary in a state of great interior suffering for the souls in Purgatory, to whom she had devoted herself from her first entrance into Religion. "I declare to you," she writes in confidence to Mother de Saumaise, "that I do not remember ever to have passed such a year in regard of suffering. It seems to me that everything serves as an instrument in the hands of the divine justice to torment me. Nothing makes me suffer more than this sanctity of justice."

It was during this year, however, on the Feast of the Visitation, that she was favored with that remarkable Vision which, as we have already mentioned, she communicated to Mother de Saumaise, and in which the Daughters of the Visitation were appointed by the Blessed Virgin depositories of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the Society of Jesus was entrusted

with the special mission of making its true value known.

It was during this year, as we have remarked, that Margaret Mary had the happiness of being present at the solemn consecration of the chapel built by the pious care of the Mother Melin in honor of the Sacred Heart within the enclosure of the Monastery of Paray.* It must have been

* This was the first building ever raised in honor of the Sacred Heart; for the little chapels or oratories spoken of as raised either within the walls of Paray or in the Monasteries of Semur, Dijon, or Moulins, were, in fact, but altars prepared in some spot within the monastery, and set apart for that purpose. This precious monument of the first triumph of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart is still in existence. It stands within the garden of the monastery, and when the glorious relics of Blessed Margaret Mary were borne in joyful solemnity on the 22d of June, 1865, the procession stopped for a while at this spot.

The painting of the Sacred Heart, designed to adorn this chapel, was placed over the altar at the time that the chapel was blessed. It was executed at Dijon, under the care of Mother de Saumaise, and was a copy of the miniature which had been sent to Margaret Mary by the Mother Greyfié. Margaret Mary thus conveyed to Mother de Saumaise her impression on first seeing it: "I cannot express to you the joy I felt on seeing our picture. I was never tired of looking at it." This picture is now in the Parish Church of Semur. A copy

also a great joy to her to see the Community come every first Friday of the month in procession to the chapel, singing the Litanies of the Sacred Heart and renew their acts of reparation and consecration to the Sacred Heart.

On the Feast of St. Francis of Sales, the following year, 1689, Margaret Mary was favored again with special graces regarding the Order of the Visitation. "God having commanded me," said the holy Founder, "to visit all the monasteries of the Institute, in order to do this I have but to visit the hearts of the Mothers Superior, for within them the hearts of all the Daughters of the Visitation should be enclosed."

"The true Daughters of the Visitation," said the holy Foundress, who seemed to accompany him, "should rejoice only in the Cross, and glory in humiliations, for they should triumph only by the Cross. Let them put aside all claim to do more or less than is marked by the Rules. The best means we have of rising from our falls is the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our holy Founder has obtained It for our Institute, in order to prevent its being destroyed

of it still adorns the chapel in which the original was first placed. The miniature sent by the Mother Greyfié, from which this was taken, and which witnessed the first homage paid by the Community of Faray to the Sacred Heart on June 21, 1686, has been lost sight of since the outbreak of the Revolution.

by the designs, of a spirit foreign to our own, one full of pride and ambition, which seeks only to ruin the spirit of humility and simplicity which is the foundation of the whole building. Satan will never succeed in his designs as long as our Institute has the Sacred Heart for defender and support."

It was soon after this that the Devotion to the Sacred Heart was represented to Margaret Mary, as we have described above, under the figure of a beautiful tree, which took root in the Order and spread its branches through all its Houses ; and the special mission of the Society to make known the Devotion was announced to her. It was at this time most probably that she wrote that letter on the subject of the Devotion to Father Rolin, her Director, which, as we have remarked, is commonly regarded as addressed to Father de La Colombière.

The esteem and veneration entertained for Margaret Mary by the Community increased daily, and became so general that on the termination of the Mother Melin's six years' Superiority in 1690, there was thought of choosing her for Mother Superior. She had received intimation of this on Holy Thursday (March 23, 1690), when our Lord presented her with a cross which she accepted, without understanding what it meant. On hearing afterwards of what was contemplated by the Community, she com-

plained to our Lord, "Is it possible, O my God, that Thou wouldst allow a creature such as I am to be exposed by being placed at the head of a Community? I beg of Thee to remove this cross from me ; I submit to any other."

Our Lord granted her request, and the Mother Catherine Antoinette de Lévy Châteaumorand was chosen Mother Superior, to the great joy of Margaret Mary.

Margaret Mary, overcoming her own reluctance to the charge of Assistant, in which she knew that the Mother Superior wished to leave her, yielded to the will of our Lord, and withdrawing her opposition to it, was continued in the charge, to the great happiness of the Community. All addressed themselves to her with great confidence, and profitted by the supernatural lights and graces which she received from our Lord, in order to be able to assist them in their interior troubles.

Her conversation was all of God, and she spoke in so moving and engaging a manner of Him that her words induced all to love Him. She spoke often of submission to the will of God from the motive of love, and she said that this was one of the surest means of attaining to sanctity. She exemplified this herself in the discharge of her office, and in all the actions of her life.

Margaret Mary had continued hitherto to

practice the hour's prayer on the night between Thursday and Friday. But the Mother Catherine Antoinette, seeing how weak and exhausted she was, thought it was unsuited to her state of health, and forbade her the practice of this or any other kind of austerity. Blessed Margaret Mary accepted this prohibition with admirable submission, replying that our Lord indeed required the practice of her, but that since it did not seem well to obedience to allow it, she would remain at peace. The Mother Superior was greatly edified at this, as she feared that she might in some manner have been unduly attached to such practices. She received also great consolation from the frankness and openness with which she spoke to her, and her esteem for her increased in proportion.

Hence Margaret Mary would often say, "I shall not live much longer, for I have no longer anything to suffer, our dear Mother takes too much care of me." This was indeed true; for she lived but four months from this time.

Another time she said to a Sister, "I shall die, without a doubt, this year, in order that I may not hinder the great fruit which our Divine Lord designs to produce by means of a book of Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."*

* The author of this work, entitled *Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ*, was Father John Croiset, S.J. He died at Avignon, January 31, 1738,

She had such faith in the promises of our Lord regarding the final triumph of the Devotion, that she never doubted, as she told Father de La Colombière, even though the whole world should combine against it, to see it established. She often repeated the words which she had heard from our Lord Himself—"I will reign in spite of My enemies and of all who oppose themselves to My designs."

leaving behind him a great reputation for sanctity. "This Religious," says Monsignor Languet in his *Life of Blessed Margaret Mary*, "was astonished on hearing what the servant of God had said of him, more especially as he had not spoken of his intention to any one. Subsequently, he fulfilled the prophecy in part by actually publishing the book which bears this title; the remainder of the prophecy we see daily accomplished in the spiritual advantage derived by so many souls from this book, which is relished by all, and several editions of which have been already published."

It is well known that one of the editions of Father Croiset's work was placed on the Index in 1704, probably, says Father Nilles, S.J. (*De rationibus Fectorum SS. Cordis Jesu et purissimi Cordis Mariæ*), on account of its containing an Office of the Sacred Heart not yet approved, or perhaps, as some others suppose, because, in explaining the object of the Devotion, an adequate position is not given to the real material Heart of our Lord. Great advantage was taken of this fact by the Jansenist party in Italy. But in the *Life of Blessed Margaret Mary* which appeared with due approval in

She lived to see it widely spread ; the diocese of Autun, however, was the last, according to her own prediction, to recognize it. This she declared, in her humility, was because she was an obstacle to it. The Bishop, Monsignor d'Hallencourt, did not grant permission for the celebration of the Feast, with the Mass and Office proper, until 1713.

Rome, in 1864, dedicated to His Holiness Pius IX., is contained the following account of the work of Father Croiset :—"It is to the following circumstances that we are indebted for the work of Father Croiset." Then are related the circumstances which have been already mentioned, and which induced Father Croiset, at that time Professor in the College at Lyons, to prepare, at the request of his scholars, a work on the Sacred Heart. "He saw," continues the account, "that such a work, so eagerly called for as it was, would prove extremely useful, and he accordingly prepared an edition. This was in the year 1690, in which year Margaret Mary died. As Father Croiset was prevented bringing it out till the following year, he was thus enabled to add an account of the virtues of Blessed Margaret Mary, and of the wonderful graces bestowed upon her. Father Croiset's work was no sooner published than it was rapidly bought up, and several editions were soon called for. In 1694 it was printed at Bordeaux, with the authority of the Archbishop, and went through several editions. Others followed at Aurillac, and another at Besançon in 1699. The fullest and most complete edition was published at Lyons, in 1698, prepared by

How great was the purity of her conscience we may judge from the fact that Father Rolin, after hearing a general confession of her life during a Retreat she made towards the close of it, hesitated for some time whether he should not order her to put it in writing and keep it, in order that after her death it might appear to what innocence and exalted sanctity a soul could attain which Almighty God had watched over and enriched with His singular graces from Father Croiset himself. Those who desire to understand more particularly the spirit and practice of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to derive from it all the fruit it is calculated to produce, will find in this book matter of edification no less than instruction. The number of editions the book has gone through is a proof of its merits, and the fruit it has produced in the hearts of all who have put it in practice shows its utility better than anything that can be said about it. If the devotion of the Faithful has rapidly exhausted the various editions of this work, they on the other hand have spread the Devotion everywhere. In this manner has been verified another prediction of Blessed Margaret Mary, who said that by means of a book by Father Croiset, of the Society of Jesus, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart should be spread everywhere" (*Vita della Beata Margherita Maria Alacoque, Religiosa Professa dell' Ordine della Visitazione di Santa Maria nel Monastero di Paray-le-Monial. Dedicata alla Santità di Nostro Signore Papa Pio IX. Roma, 1864. Tipographia Salviucci*).

her very cradle. Our Lord was still more liberal to her towards the close of her life, and she received from Him some most consoling assurances, which she never very definitely explained.

She was desirous, however, of preparing herself for death, which she declared was near, by a kind of interior Retreat of forty days, during which she maintained a more intimate recollection, though attending at the same time to her duties as Assistant, in order that she might ascertain whence came that ardent desire she had to die.

"Since the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen (July 22, 1690), I have felt extremely desirous," she says, "to reform my life, in order to hold myself ready to appear before the sanctity of God, Whose justice is so terrible and His judgments unsearchable." "I have proposed then," she continues, "with a view to this, to make an interior Retreat in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ."

Blessed Margaret Mary had been now for some years so united to God that neither her sleep nor any occupation was capable of interrupting this union. She was entirely detached from herself, and from every object in the world. Her only suffering arose from the fact that she no longer suffered, and her soul enjoyed such a tranquillity that it was capable even of inspiring her with alarm. "I do not know what to think

of the state I am now in," she wrote to her Director, Father Rolin, in a letter which we have partly quoted before. "Every desire has so ceased within me that I am surprised at it. I am afraid that this pretended peace may be an effect of that state of insensibility in which God sometimes leaves faithless souls. I can no longer now wish or desire anything in this world, though I see that in point of virtue I am altogether destitute. I would fain sometimes grieve but I cannot, for it is no longer in my power, so to say, to act. I feel only a perfect acquiescence in the good pleasure of God, and an unspeakable pleasure in suffering. The thought which consoles me from time to time is that the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ will do all for me if I leave It to act; It will will, love, and desire for me, and will supply for all my defects."

It would seem that our Lord had accomplished in her His designs, and that He was now putting the last stroke, as it were, to the marvellous work He had wrought in her soul. It is difficult to know which most to admire, the wonderful graces and favors she received from our Lord, or the fidelity with which she corresponded to them. Her whole life was an exercise of high and solid virtue, and in her death her last act was one of pure love.

She was attacked by a slight fever on the eve

of the annual Retreat. Being asked by a Sister whether she thought she should be able to make it, "Yes," she replied, "but it will be the great Retreat." She was confined to her bed for nine days before her death. These she employed in preparing for the coming of her Spouse, though her illness appeared to be only trifling. The physician of the monastery, M. Billet, had often had occasion to observe the illnesses of Blessed Margaret Mary. There was something about them inexplicable by the common laws of nature. They were caused, he said, by divine love, and there was no remedy for them. He gave it as his opinion now that there was nothing serious. Even on the very day of her death he declared that there was no appearance that she was likely to die. Margaret Mary, however remained unchanged in her opinion.

The certainty she felt of her approaching death made her ask earnestly for the holy Viaticum. On being told that it was not thought desirable, she begged that at least she might be allowed to receive Holy Communion, as she was still fasting. This she was allowed to do, and she received the Blessed Sacrament by way of Viaticum, being well assured that she was receiving It for the last time. With what ardent love she received our Lord may be judged from the love she had ever entertained for Him in this adorable Mystery.

A Sister, observing that she suffered greatly, offered to procure her some relief. Margaret Mary thanked her, but replied that the short time that remained was too precious not to turn it to the best account. All who saw her were struck with the extraordinary joy she manifested at the thought of death. But our Lord was pleased to interrupt for a time the extraordinary sweetness she experienced, and filled her soul with such a dread of His justice that she was seized on a sudden with a strange terror at the thought of the judgments of God.

She was seen to tremble ; she bowed her soul before her crucifix, and repeated frequently : "Mercy, O my God, mercy !" This terror, however, soon afterwards disappeared. Her soul enjoyed a great calm, and she was filled with an assurance of her salvation. Joy and peace appeared again upon her countenance, and she exclaimed : "Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo ;" at other times : "What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth ?" *

Her difficulty of breathing was so great that she could no longer remain lying in bed, and it was necessary to support her in order to enable her to draw her breath. "I am burning, I am burning !" she often exclaimed. "What a happi-

ness would it be were it only with divine love ! But I have never known how to love my God perfectly." Then turning to those who were supporting her,* "Beg pardon of Him for me," she said, "and love Him with all your hearts to make reparation for all the time during which I have failed to do so. Oh ! what a happiness to love God ! Love, then, this Love, and love Him perfectly." She uttered these words with such transport, that it was evident her own heart was full of this divine love. "Shall I go on long ?" she asked ; and when told that the physician was of opinion that she would not die, "Ah, Lord !" she exclaimed, "when wilt Thou withdraw me from this place of exile ?" repeating frequently, "Ad Te levavi oculos meos," &c., "Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi," &c. "Yes, I hope," she said, "that through the mercy of the Sacred Heart we shall go into the House of the Lord." She asked those about her to repeat the Litany of the Sacred Heart, and also that of the Blessed Virgin, and to invoke her holy Founder, her Guardian Angel, and St. Joseph.

The love of humiliations and the desire of being

* These were Sister Frances Verchère and Sister Péronne Rosalie de Farges, from whose relation this account is taken. Blessed Margaret Mary had herself told them, some years before, that she should expire in their arms.

forgotten and unknown by creatures, which had so characterized her whole life, remained with her to her last breath. A few hours before her death, she made her Mother Superior* promise that she would never speak of anything she had ever told her in confidence which might turn to her advantage. And calling one of the Sisters who had been her Novice,† and whom she had a great regard for on account of her virtue, she asked her to write without delay to Father Rolin, to beg of him to burn her letters and to observe inviolably the secrecy which she had so often asked of him.

An hour before she expired she sent word to the Mother Superior, having promised her that she would not die without letting her know. She begged to be allowed to receive Extreme Unction. When it had been administered, she thanked the Mother Superior for all the kindness and attention shown her and the desire that was manifested to give her relief, but told her that she no longer needed it, and that nothing more remained for her now but to bury herself in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, and there to breathe forth her last sigh.

After this she remained for some time perfectly calm, and pronouncing the holy name of JESUS, she peacefully breathed forth her spirit

* Mother de Lévy Châteaumorand.

† Sister Péronne Rosalie de Farges.

in an act of that ardent love which had from her earliest years taken such complete possession of her soul.

The physician, on coming immediately after she had expired, appeared much surprised, for he said he had discovered no symptoms which led him to anticipate so sudden a death. He had been constantly surprised, he said, during her life to observe how, with so wasted a frame, she could have borne the serious illnesses she had had. But as it was divine love, he said, which had caused them, so he did not doubt her unexpected death was to be ascribed to the same cause. He could not refrain from expressing the effect produced upon his mind by her virtues. He told the Sisters that they had lost in her the most perfect Religious he had ever been acquainted with, and that he did not doubt that they possessed in her now a powerful advocate with the Sacred Heart.

Margaret Mary died on October 17, 1690, in the forty-second year of her age, and the eighteenth of her Religious Profession, about eight o'clock in the evening, in the arms of the two Sisters to whom she had herself predicted this several years before.*

* In commemoration of the moment when Blessed Margaret Mary breathed forth her soul, the Community of Paray have been in the habit of repairing in procession every year, on the 17th of October, between seven and

"The Saint is dead!" was the expression which immediately announced the event in the monastery and throughout the town. The concourse of the people at her funeral was so great that the Priests were often interrupted in the ceremony by the noise of persons begging that their beads might touch the body. All were desirous of obtaining some relic of her. She had lived and died in such poverty that nothing was to be found in her cell besides her Rules and her discipline.

Blessed Margaret Mary's body was deposited in the ordinary burial-place of the Community, beneath the choir. In 1703 the coffin was opened, and the precious bones were collected and placed in a case of oak, near the spot where she had been buried. Here they remained until the period of the expulsion of the Sisters in 1792.

eight in the evening, to the room in which she expired, now converted into a chapel, there to join in prayers and cantiques.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

1690—1864.

THE constant recourse of the Faithful to the intercession of Margaret Mary, and the numerous favors* obtained through her inter-

* The first authentic miracle wrought through the intercession of Margaret Mary was the cure of the Sister Claude Angélique Desmoulins, twenty years of age, and Professed of the Monastery of Paray. She had been confined to her bed for three months, half of her body being paralyzed. She had left off for a month applying any remedies, all having been found useless, when, being strongly urged by Sister Péronne Rosalie de Farges to have recourse to the intercession of Margaret Mary, she agreed to do so. She complied at first only to satisfy the Sister, but having had a dream, February 18, 1713, in which she thought she was cured by wearing a dress which had touched the body of Margaret Mary, she asked on waking to be allowed to put it on. The Infirmarian having with difficulty placed it upon her, a quarter of an hour after she felt perfectly cured, asked for her clothes, dressed herself, and walked into the Choir where the Community were reciting Prime. A *Te Deum* was sung in thanksgiving, and the joy was univer-

cession strengthening daily the general opinion of her sanctity, the Bishop of Autun, Monsignor d'Hallencourt, yielding to the earnest solicitations of Mother Anne Elizabeth de La Garde, the Mother Superior of Paray, caused a process of inquiry to be instituted in 1715 into the life and miracles of the servant of God. M. Languet, at that time Vicar-General of the diocese, was charged with the care of conducting it, but having been raised, in the meantime, to the see of Soissons, he handed over his commission, with due authorization, to Dom de Bansière, Prior of the Benedictine Abbey of Paray. This juridical process, instituted during the lifetime of many of the contemporaries of Margaret Mary, forms the basis of all the subsequent proceedings. The original documents relating to it are preserved in the archives of the Bishop of Autun and in those of the Monastery of Paray. Owing, however, to the absorbing character of the public events which affected so closely the interests of the Church at this time, springing from Jansenism, the false philosophy sal. The doctors who had attended her were called in at once, and gave their attestations that the cure was miraculous. M. Languet, at that time Vicar-General of the diocese of Autun, and Spiritual Father of the Monastery of Paray, regarded the miracle as most solidly attested, and was careful to take juridical information regarding it.

of the period, and the Revolution, the Cause remained for some time suspended at the same stage.

The confidence of the Faithful, nevertheless, in the intercession of Margaret Mary remained meanwhile unabated, and her tomb was constantly visited. The circular letters of the Monastery of Paray give us the names of some illustrious visitors to the shrine, amongst others of the Cardinal de Bouillon, who was fond of comparing the vaults of Paray to the catacombs of Rome, both from their form of structure and from their containing the bones of Blessed Margaret Mary; of Monsignor Malvin de Montazet, Bishop of Autun in 1750, who, after satisfying his devotion, expressed his hope to see the faithful lover of our Lord honored one day by the public veneration of the Faithful, and his desire to employ all his zeal, as far as he was able, in promoting the Cause.

The year 1786 witnessed an interesting ceremony at Paray, in the celebration of the first centenary of the public recognition of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart by the Community "We chose the 21st of June," wrote the Sisters in their circular letter of that year, "as being a memorable day on which one hundred years before, our esteemed Sister des Escures exposed in the Choir the picture which had been honored

in the Novitiate in the year 1685.* We obtained permission to have the Blessed Sacrament exposed the whole day, and we spent the day in thanking our Lord for the favor He had conferred on our Institute, and our House in particular, in honoring us with the gift of His Sacred Heart.

The day was closed by a visit in procession to the chapel within the enclosure, dedicated to the Sacred Heart. It was an interesting sight to see on either side of the Altar the two cases containing the precious relics of Father de La Colombière and Blessed Margaret Mary, not far from the spot where the fervent Disciple of the Sacred Heart had been seen kneeling for three hours absorbed in prayer, on the occasion of the blessing of the chapel on September 7th, 1688.

A melancholy event, meanwhile, was impending over the Community. On the 16th of September, 1792, intimation was given to them that they would be required to quit their monastery on the 23d.

On the night preceding this day, which had been ushered in by attempts at violence on the part of the populace, the Sisters heard Mass

* It would seem, however, from the account above given, that the picture which received the homage of the Community in 1686 was different from that which was first exposed in the Novitiate in 1685.

and received Holy Communion, and on the following night quitted their peaceful seclusion, carrying with them in part the precious treasure of their relics ; a part they consigned to the care of the Sisters who had charge of the hospital, and by whom they were faithfully restored on the re-establishment of their monastery. The case, however, containing the relics of Blessed Margaret Mary they entrusted to one of their own Sisters, who was remaining with her friends in the neighborhood of the monastery. On her being obliged later to return to her own native district, she consigned her sacred trust to Sister Mary Teresa Petit,* a young Religious of Paray,

* This was the Sister whose miraculous cure holds the first place among the three miracles recognized in the Apostolic Decree respecting the miracles of Blessed Margaret Mary published April 24, 1864. It is interesting to hear the evidence given on oath by the Sister regarding these precious relics whilst under her keeping. "I declare," she says, "that having been placed in charge of the precious remains of our Venerable Sister Alacoque during the stormy period of the Revolution, I was never at pains to conceal them, though on several occasions domiciliary visits were paid to our house. The most impious would never allow a word to be said against the precious treasure, nor did they ever lose the confidence they had in the protection of the servant of God. They had recourse to her relics themselves in their illnesses, and many have told me that

whose family joyfully took charge of it, and preserved it with veneration till the year 1801.

For eight years the Sisters were obliged to live separated one from the other. The Concordat of 1801 enabled them to reassemble, and they were even able to rent a portion of the monastery, though on very hard terms. To these, however, they submitted, to avoid the alternative of seeing their cherished monuments, hallowed as they were by so many sacred memories, destroyed by their revolutionary owner. They have secured by this act the undying gratitude of those for whom they preserved these treasured memorials.

The little colony numbered nine persons, at the head of whom was the esteemed Mother Verchère. Several of the older Sisters were dead ; others were obliged for a time to remain with their families. The precious relics of Blessed Margaret Mary now found their place again in the keeping of the Community.

The Sisters, obliged to find a means of support in the state of destitution to which they had been reduced, undertook the work of education, and yielding to the wishes of the families who consigned their children to their care, they they had experienced the effects of her power with God. And this was the case not only with inhabitants of the town, but other persons also came from a great distance to visit these relics."

added a boarding-school to the charge which they had at first undertaken of externs. Their increasing numbers obliged them to look out for a larger site, and the authorities of the town having offered them accommodation at the ancient priory of the Benedictines, they moved thither, and a second time quitted their monastery, in 1809.

The relics of Blessed Margaret Mary still accompanied them in their changes, and inspired them with the hope of returning one day to their own monastery, and resuming the Rules of Religious life. The difficulties, however, appeared insurmountable, and in 1817, the Community of Moulins having reunited at Charité-sur-Loire, the greater number of the Sisters, in their desire to embrace once again the happiness of regular life, eagerly joined them. Two only of the number, Mary Rose Carmoy and Mary Teresa Petit, by a special disposition, as it would seem, of Divine Providence, remained at Paray by an express order of the Bishop, who still cherished the hope of seeing the monastery re-established, and who wished that there should be on the spot members of the old Community, on whom the young Community might be grafted.

When the Sisters who were leaving for Charité-sur-Loire desired to take with them the relics of Blessed Margaret Mary, the civil authorities

interposed. The seals of the town were placed upon them, and they were handed over to the keeping of the Curé of the parish. Such was the manner in which this precious treasure was preserved to Paray.

The two Sisters, Mary Rose and Mary Teresa, continued the work of education at Paray, and so great was the influence they gained amongst the families of the town, that they began to entertain hopes of seeing their beloved monastery restored to them. This was indeed brought about a few years later, through the means of the Bishop, Mgr. Roch-Etienne de Vichy, and by his influence the monastery was purchased for fifty thousand francs, and a further sum contributed, at his appeal, for restoring it in a manner suited to its character.

On the 16th of June, 1823, the monastery was solemnly blessed, amidst a vast concourse of Priests and laity, by Mgr. de Vichy. The relics of Blessed Margaret Mary had been placed in a little oratory adjoining the Choir, where they remained for a year. They were then removed, in order to avoid all appearance of anticipating the decision of the Church by any public honor, and were placed, secured by a key, in a tomb prepared at the entrance of the Choir, and covered with a monumental slab.

These precautions had been taken in conformity with instructions received from Rome in

favor of the Cause, Mgr. de Vichy having applied in 1819 to the Holy See for authorization to remove it. This authorization was granted, and the Vicar-General came to Paray, instructed by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, to institute a preliminary inquiry. The object of the inquiry was to establish in a general manner that there seemed to be nothing to prevent the Cause being sent to Rome, and that the opinion of the heroic virtues of the servant of God, and of her power with God, was sufficiently well founded in the minds of the Faithful to give reasonable hope of the Cause succeeding. The process was crowned with complete success, and by a Decree of March 30, 1824, the Cause was introduced at Rome, and Margaret Mary received the title of Venerable.

On the 22d of July, 1830, the tomb in which the relics of Margaret Mary had been deposited was solemnly opened by Mgr. d'Hericourt, who had succeeded Mgr. de Vichy in the see of Autun. The relics were duly examined, enclosed in a case of walnut-wood, and removed from the Choir, in order to avoid all appearance of anticipated public veneration, preparatory to placing them in a spot prepared for them in the Cloister.

Hither they were conducted in procession, the Episcopal seal was placed upon them, and on the stone which covered them was engraved the

simple inscription, "Here lies the Venerable Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque." On this occasion occurred the glorious cure of Sister Mary Teresa Petit, which we have spoken of as receiving from the Apostolic Decree its character of a true miracle.

The Decree establishing the heroic character of the virtues of Margaret Mary, which had been prepared in May, 1846, the date of the death of Gregory XVI., was drawn up by order of His Holiness Pius IX., in August, 1846, and on the twenty-third of the same month, the Holy Father surprised the Sisters by a visit to the monastery, and there promulgated the Decree himself in person. "We entertain a particular inclination towards your Order," were the words of the Holy Father before quitting the monastery, "because it is founded on the gentleness of St. Francis of Sales."

His Holiness gave proof of this by giving orders for the prosecution of the Cause, and on the 24th of April, 1864, the Decree was published establishing the truth of the miracles attributed to Margaret Mary, and on the 24th of June of the same year the Decree of the Beatification was published with great solemnity in the Lateran Basilica.

Margaret Mary having received from the Church the title of Blessed, Mgr. Borghi, Chamberlain to His Holiness, and Postulator of the

Cause, was delegated from Rome to preside, with the Bishop of Autun, at the opening of her tomb, preparatory to the solemn exaltation of her relics. On the 13th of July, the slab which covered the tomb was removed, by order of the two Prelates, in presence of a large body of the Clergy who had assembled from different parts of France.

The second case containing the relics was borne in procession into the interior of the monastery. After the seals had been removed, and the relics formally examined, the body of Blessed Margaret Mary was placed temporarily in a rich case, sealed, and then borne in procession to the throne which had been prepared for its reception in the centre of the Choir. After the celebration of the day by solemn services in the church of the monastery and in the parish church of Paray, Mgr. Borghi returned on the following day to Rome, in order to make preparations for the great solemnity of the Beatification, which was fixed for the 18th of September.

It is not necessary to describe here the splendor of St. Peter's, the illuminations, the inscriptions, the notes of joy given to the city by the bells and the cannon from the Castle of St. Angelo, as the *Te Deum* was entoned on the reading of the Apostolic Decree of the Beatification, and the veil fell from before the picture

of Blessed Margaret Mary representing her ascending on her way to Heaven.

The day was celebrated with all solemnity and every demonstration of joy at Paray, and a relic of Blessed Margaret Mary was presented to the public veneration of the Clergy and the Faithful.

The general enthusiasm manifested itself in a resolution to raise an oratory in commemoration of this happy event. An elegant building was commenced in the spring of the following year, 1865, ; it was built at the entrance to the town and will be the first chapel dedicated to Blessed Margaret Mary, as soon as her Canonization shall allow of its being duly consecrated to her.

The handsomest monument, however, was a large case of silver, the joint contribution of the piety of France, Belgium, Spain, and England, adorned with gold, enamel, and precious stones, destined to contain the effigy and relics of Blessed Margaret Mary, and in which they were duly placed with the most religious preparation and care, preparatory to the celebration of the solemn Triduum of thanksgiving, fixed for the 22d, 23d, and 24th days of June.

There were present at these solemnities a large number of Prelates, numerous Religious of all Orders, above six hundred Priests, and more than a hundred thousand persons who attended at different times. The relics of Blessed

Margaret Mary were solemnly translated in a procession which, by a special authorization obtained from Rome, passed through the town to the sanctuary of the parish church, where they remained during the rest of the Triduum, and were finally deposited under the high altar of the church of the monastery. This shrine, before which fifteen lamps are kept burning day and night, is constantly visited by the piety of numerous pilgrims.

The cell in which the humble Disciple of the Sacred Heart breathed forth her pure soul has been transformed into a chapel. On the altar are preserved many relics of Blessed Margaret Mary. This oratory was blessed by Mgr. de Marguerye, Bishop of Autun, who there offered the Holy Sacrifice on the 10th of June, 1866. The same Prelate has ever taken every occasion in his visits to Rome of advancing the Cause of Blessed Margaret Mary. Urged by him, numerous Cardinals, Bishops, and persons of rank, have begged of His Holiness to give orders for the Cause to be resumed. On the 6th of September, 1866, His Holiness was pleased to sign the order for resuming the Cause. We have thus a guarantee for looking forward with hope to the time when we may invoke Blessed Margaret Mary under the title of Saint.



CHAPTER XXIX.

1697—1864.

BLESSED MARGARET MARY appears to hold the same place with regard to the Feast of the Sacred Heart which is held by Blessed Juliana in regard of the Feast of Corpus Christi. It was to Margaret Mary that the revelation was made by our Blessed Lord enjoining the establishment of the Feast, and it is from the particulars of this revelation that we are to draw our knowledge of the design our Lord had in view in instituting it, and of the distinctive character of the Devotion, which is in a manner embodied in it.

The Sacred Heart of our Lord, it is obvious to remark, has been an object of devotion from the first moment of Its existence, and has awakened the ardent love of the Faithful from the earliest ages of the Church. A long train of names may be adduced of Saints who have in express terms breathed forth their devotion to the Sacred Heart. The names of St. Austin, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard, SS. Gertrude and Mechtildis, arise spontaneously to the memory when the Sacred Heart is mentioned, and their burning

and tender words glow with the divine fire and exhale the divine perfume and sweetness which rise from the depths of the Devotion.

But it seemed to be in the designs of the Divine Providence, which knows the times and seasons of the Church, and reserves the fitting remedy for the moment of its need, to defer the bestowal of the precious gift of the Sacred Heart of the Incarnate Word upon the Faithful in general until such time as love and faith had grown cold and called for this sovereign gift which was to cast the fire of divine love into the hearts of all. Such is the truth conveyed by the answer of St. John the Evangelist to St. Gertrude, as we read in her *Insinuations of Divine Piety*.* On her asking him "Why it was that he had not explained for the good of the Church all the beatings of the Divine and Sacred Heart of Jesus, having drunk them in himself from their source as he lay on the Bosom of our Lord?" he replied, we are told, that "the full persuasive sweetness of the beatings of that Divine Heart was reserved to be revealed at a later time, when the world should have grown old and be sunk in tepidity, that it might thus be rekindled and reawakened to the love of God."

And how could this be done more effectually than by the Devotion to the Sacred Heart? Such would seem to have been the design of

* Bk. iv., ch. iv.

our Blessed Lord in revealing it to Blessed Margaret Mary. "That He might the more enkindle the fire of divine charity," are the words of the Decree of her Beatification, "He would have the veneration and worship of His most Sacred Heart established and promoted in His Church. For who is there so hard-hearted and unfeeling as not to be moved to make a return of love to that most amiable Heart Which was pierced and wounded with the lance in order that our souls might find therein a hiding-place and secure retreat, to which we might betake ourselves in safety from the attacks and snares of our enemies? Who would not be provoked to show every mark of love and honor to that Sacred Heart from the Wound of Which flowed forth water and blood, the source of our life and salvation?"

The origin then of this Devotion is to be traced to the divine providence of our Lord, and the marvellous rapidity with which it has spread through the hearts of the Faithful is to be attributed to the action of the Holy Spirit, Whose office it is to glorify our Lord, by carrying out His design of making Himself known to mankind. This reflection supplies the answer to the objection which is sometimes urged to the selection of the Sacred Heart of our Lord in particular, from amongst the other portions of His Sacred Body, as an object of the

devotion of the Faithful. It is no human invention, but it is a manifestation of the divine will made known by a private revelation, under the authoritative sanction of the Church, and carried out by the interior action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the Faithful.

The origin, then, of this work of divine wisdom and goodness we see in the history of the revelation made to Blessed Margaret Mary, whose whole life seemed designed only to prepare her for discharging her glorious mission of making known this Devotion. Such is the language of the Decree of the Beatification: "In order to establish and spread far and wide amongst mankind this so saving and just a Devotion, our Saviour vouchsafed to choose His servant, the Venerable Margaret Mary, who by her innocence of life and constant practice of every virtue proved herself worthy, with the aid of divine grace, of this exalted office and charge."

The progress of this Devotion is to be read in the marvellous success with which it made its way in every part of the world, in the face of great difficulties and without the aid of human support.

The approval of the Church is to be seen in the history of those successive grants made to the repeated petitions of the Faithful. It is interesting to notice, on the one hand, the proofs

of the constantly increasing devotion of the Faithful and on the other the watchful care with which the Church seeks to keep in check and at length fully to comply with the pious wishes of her children.

We are called upon here, however, first to notice the position held by our Blessed Lady in relation to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord. The true Morning Star, as she ushers in at her birth the rising of the Sun of Justice, Who is to light up a benighted world and warm it with His rays, so by the devotion which she awakens in the hearts of men by her Immaculate Heart, she prepares them to receive the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of her Divine Son.

It was only a few months after the date of the birth of Blessed Margaret Mary, the Apostle of the Sacred Heart of our Lord, that Père Eudes, who had devoted himself and the Congregation he had formed to the most pure Heart of our Lady, was celebrating in the Cathedral of Autun, within a few miles of her birth-place, the first solemn Mass in honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Born in 1601, near Argentan, Père Eudes had manifested from his earliest years the most tender devotion to Jesus and Mary. Brought up under the Fathers de Bérulle and de Condren, in the society founded by M. Olier, he had been taught to give the

first place in his heart to a personal devotion to the Divine Mother and her Son, and in every mystery to fathom the depths which are to be found in the thought of them. So jealous was he of preserving the treasure which he found in them, that he formed the resolution in 1641 of employing the rest of his life in promoting the Devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. With this view, he began by consecrating to the most pure Heart of Mary, which he ever regarded as one with the Heart of Jesus, the two Religious Congregations which he established at this period, the Order of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge and the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. The invocations in daily and familiar use in these Congregations breathe and express the devotion with which their holy Founder was animated, and that peculiar characteristic of his devotion, to which we have alluded, by which he regarded the two Sacred Hearts but as one. "Hail most loving Heart of Jesus and Mary!" was their constant aspiration. "Blessed be the most loving Heart of Jesus and Mary, forever and beyond all eternity!"

It was Père Eudes who inspired the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, Mother of Louis XIV. of France, with so lively a devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

By means of the Congregation of Priests which

he had formed, he spread throughout the provinces which he had visited the same Devotion, and everywhere he erected Confraternities either of the Immaculate Heart of our Blessed Lady or of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary. In 1673-1674, Clement X. addressed to him six Briefs in favor of Confraternities erected or about to be erected in the Seminaries of his Congregation under the invocation of the Heart of Jesus and Mary.*

In order to meet the wants of some souls who, though not called to embrace religious life, yet aspire to a higher degree of sanctity than is compatible with the ordinary condition of persons living in the world, he founded a new Association under the title of the "Society of the Children of the Sacred Heart of the Mother Most Admirable."

Père Eudes also sought by the publication of numerous works to propagate still more widely the Devotion to the Sacred Hearts. His principal work is entitled, *The Book of the most Admirable Heart of the most Holy Mother of God*. He finished it only a few days before the close of his life, and it was not printed until two years after his death, in 1682.

Père Eudes celebrated the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary, as we have seen, by permission of the Bishop, Mgr. de Ragny, with great solem-

* *Sub invocatione Cordis Jesu et Mariæ.*

nity in the Cathedral of Autun in 1648. It was celebrated afterwards in the dioceses of Soissons, Evreux, Bourges, and in other parts of France.

In 1669, Père Eudes obtained permission also from Mgr. de Vieuville, Bishop of Rennes, who had entrusted him with the charge of his diocesan seminary, for the Priests of his Congregation to celebrate solemnly every year the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with an octave. He received also about the same time similar permission from several other Bishops of France in their several dioceses. The day fixed for the celebration of the Feast was the 20th of October.

In this manner did the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Mary, so ardently propagated by Père Eudes, lead the way to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and prepare the hearts of the Faithful, by the local recognition of the Feast on the part of the Bishops of France, for receiving the Devotion when it should be manifested by special revelation to Blessed Margaret Mary, and sanctioned for the Church in general by the Apostolical authority of the Holy See.

In 1697, then, seven years after the death of Blessed Margaret Mary, we first meet with a petition presented to the Holy See, under the Pontificate of Innocent XII., by Mary of Modena, Queen of James II. of England, for the institution of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of

Jesus, with a proper Mass, for the churches of the Religious of the Visitation.

In support of the petition was urged by the Postulator of the Cause the devotion of the Daughters of St. Francis of Sales, instilled into them by their Founder, towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus, supported by the earnest request on the part of the Queen of England. The principal objection to the petition was founded on the alleged inexpediency of introducing a new Feast into the Church. The Sacred Congregation judged it most prudent, under the circumstances, to adopt a middle course, and, by a Decree dated March 30, 1627, granted permission to the Religious of the Visitation to keep the Feast of the Five Wounds on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi.

After a lapse of about thirty years, under the Pontificate of Benedict XIII., still more fervent petitions, according to the expression of Benedict XIV., were addressed to the Holy See by the Religious of the Visitation, supported by Augustus, King of Poland, and the Bishops of Cracow and Marseilles, for the grant of a proper Office and Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The circumstances which led the city of Marseilles to take so deep an interest in the cause of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart are well known. Whilst several thousands of the inhabi-

tants were swept off daily by the plague which ravaged the city, their heroic Bishop, Henry Francis Xavier de Belsunce, placed all his hope in consecrating his flock by a public and solemn act to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. No sooner was this done, than the plague stayed its ravages.

The Postulator of the Cause on this occasion was Father Joseph de Galliffet, S.J., who printed and published in Rome this same year, 1726, his famous work, *On the Worship of the Sacred Heart of our God and Lord Jesus Christ*. He drew up also, and distributed amongst the members of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, papers on the same subject, "than which," according to the expression of Benedict XIV., "nothing could be more perfect." Testimonies were brought from Monsignor Languet's *Life of Blessed Margaret Mary*, and from the *Book of Retrcats* by Father de La Colombière, and catalogues produced of the various kingdoms, provinces, dioceses, and Religious Orders in which Confraternities in honor of the Sacred Heart were established.

The principal argument adduced in favor of the establishment of the Feast was founded upon the establishment by the Church of the Feast of Corpus Christi, which owed its rise to a private revelation made to Blessed Juliana of Liege.

The office of "Promotor Fidei" on this occasion was discharged by Prosper Lambertini, afterwards Benedict XIV. It was urged in objection by him that the establishment of the Feast of the Sacred Heart would give rise to demands for other Feasts in honor of other parts of our Lord's sacred Body; that the revelation made to Margaret Mary, unlike that made to Blessed Juliana, had not yet been juridically examined or established by any well-authenticated miracle. He added also, as he states himself in his famous work,* that it was laid down as certain by the Postulators of the Cause that the heart was, in man, the sensible co-principle of the affections, and the centre of all interior joy and grief, but that, as this was a philosophical question, the Church would act prudently in abstaining from deciding it. "On this account," he remarks, "I suggested with due reverence that the petition should not be granted."

The Sacred Congregation of Rites, not wishing to anticipate the judgment of the Holy See regarding the revelation made to Margaret Mary, or to appear to favor one side rather than another in the philosophical question, gave for answer, July 12, 1726, *Non proposita*, a form of reply sometimes used, remarks Benedict XIV., in cases where it is wished to convey to the Postulators that it would be better if they ab-

* *De Servorum Dñe Beatificatione.*

stained from petitions which, from their involving many difficult questions, render a reply in the negative probable.

On the petition being still urged, the Sacred Congregation, whether because they judged that the time had not yet come for a decision, or that the difficulties had not been satisfactorily solved, replied, on the 30th of July, 1729, simply *Negative*.

The Postulators, however, still far from discouraged, prepared fresh remarks to be submitted to the Sacred Congregation, in which they endeavored to show that the Cause did not really depend on the decision of the philosophical question, and at the same time procured fervent prayers to be offered that the Feast might be celebrated throughout the whole Church.

The objection drawn from the novelty of the Devotion had been already answered. If the Devotion be regarded as consisting in the interior worship paid to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the writings of the Saints sufficiently show that it is not new. If it be regarded as a public worship paid to the Sacred Heart, and presenting certain definite practices of piety, then it is new. But the objection in this sense would tell with equal force against every devotion practiced in the Church, for at one time each was new.

As regards the objection that the institution

of the Feast would open the way to demands for an endless variety of Feasts in honor of each portion of our Lord's sacred Body, this had been already sufficiently answered by Father Galliffet.

For it is unquestioned that, amongst all nations and by all mankind, the heart is regarded as holding the noblest place in the body. A Sovereign wishing to leave with his country the most precious memorial of himself, would bequeath his heart.

Though, indeed, there is not a portion of our Lord's Sacred Body which is not, by reason of its hypostatic union with the Person of the Eternal Word, worthy of infinite honor. And we have but to think of the Sacred Hands, Feet, Eyes, of our Divine Lord to understand what a depth of reason is contained in the thought of them for giving the homage of our hearts to each of them in particular.

This is most true as regards acts of interior homage and love paid to them, but when there is question of exterior and public worship paid by the Church, other considerations enter in. And, in the first place, to sanction such a worship it is necessary that Almighty God should Himself make known His will, either by private revelation, by miracles, or by a general impulse given to the hearts of the Faithful, as the history of the Church tells us **He** has always done in similar cases.

When there is question of the introduction of a new devotion into the Church, it must always be borne in mind that this does not depend on man, and cannot be a human work, but is wholly the work of God. It is God alone Who can change the hearts of men, and Who raises up in His Church new devotions, as He sees His own glory or the wants of the Faithful require.

Benedict XIII. having died in 1730, the Cause was again brought forward under the Pontificate of Clement XIII., at the instance of most of the Bishops of Poland, and of the Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart in Rome. The Sacred Congregation of Rites, "being full well assured," as is expressed in the Decree of 1665, "that the worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was now extended through nearly every part of the Catholic world, under the favor of their Bishops, and enriched by the Holy See with many thousand Briefs of indulgences given to almost innumerable Confraternities erected under the title of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," granted a proper Office and Mass of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the kingdom of Poland and the Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart in Rome.

This favor was extended, at their earnest petition, to the Religious of the Visitation. The proper Office and Mass was granted, by a Decree of July 10th, 1765, to the whole Order,

with the rite of a *duplex majus*, on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi.

The example of the Visitation was followed with alacrity by numerous dioceses and most Religious Orders, so that the Sacred Congregation was able to say in 1856 that "the Faithful everywhere had felt so ardently urged to recall the memory of the infinite charity of this Divine Heart that at that time there was hardly a single Church which did not rejoice in having obtained from the Apostolic See the privilege of celebrating the Feast."

Yet it is remarkable that the Holy See, notwithstanding the favor with which it regarded the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, had always up to the year 1856, refused to listen to the petitions of those who begged to have it extended to the whole world.

Some have considered this as an indication of the finger of God, and have regarded the marvellous alacrity with which the Devotion was taken up by the Faithful throughout the world as presenting even a stronger proof of its divine character than if the Holy See, by its own authority, had given a formal approbation for the celebration of the Feast through the whole Church.

It was the consideration of the joyful reception of the Feast by the Faithful throughout the whole world that moved his present Holiness,

Pius IX., at the petition of the Bishops of France, to extend, by a Decree dated August 23d, 1856, the celebration of the Feast to the whole world, with the Mass *Miserebitur* as a *duplex majus*, on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi.

His Holiness crowned this confirmation of the Feast by the Beatification, on the 19th of August, 1864, of Blessed Margaret Mary. "To this end," said the Postulator of the Cause, "was this highest honor bestowed by the Holy See on Sister Margaret Mary, in order that the Faithful might find in the record of her wonderful actions a most fitting school for their instruction, and fresh incitement to tend with greater ease and alacrity to the practice of divine charity, seeing what a return of love she made to Almighty God, Who, in the language of St. Chrysostom, 'wishes to be served rather by love than fear.'"

The triumph of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart over the bitter hostility to which it has been exposed presents of itself a most convincing proof of its divine origin.

The first concession of the Feast in 1765, under Clement XIII., was the signal for every effort of virulent animosity on the part of its opponents. From that date their attacks under Clement XIII. and XIV. tended, together with the destruction of the Society of Jesus, to the

extinction of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the abolition of the Feast from the calendar. So true was the Society of Jesus to its glorious mission of upholding the Devotion that its very existence was identified with the Cause, and the continuance of the one was regarded as the security for the revival of the other. "There is good reason to suspect," say the Acts of the Congregation of Florence, "that the Order of the Jesuits looks forward to reuniting its scattered members under the standard of the Heart of Jesus."*

Scipio de Ricci, Bishop of Pistoia, published in 1781 his notorious Pastoral, in which he gave public expression to his hostility to the Holy See, and was followed by other Jansenist Bishops in his attacks upon the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

By his partizans in Naples, books upon the Sacred Heart were forbidden, and the Feast of the Sacred Heart was removed in several instances from the calendars. At Genoa all works on the Sacred Heart were proscribed by the civil authorities; at Verona the Confraternities of the Sacred Heart were abolished.

After this bitter war had been thus carried on in Italy for thirty years, its abettors were doomed to see all their labors frustrated by the publication of the Constitution of Pope Pius VI.,

* *Acta Congreg. Florentin.*, 1787. vol. i., p. 15.

Auctorem Fidei, "dictated," says the illustrious Cardinal Gerdil, "by Divine Wisdom Itself for the glory of the Church and the salvation of the people." By it the Devotion to the Sacred Heart was maintained in all its integrity against the attacks of its opponents, and the Feast of the Sacred Heart triumphed in Italy.

In the Austrian dominions the opponents of the Sacred Heart had recourse to stratagem to gain their ends, and professed to defend the true sense of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. To this end they introduced into Germany the Jansenist works published in Italy. But they called in also to their aid the secular arm. They obtained a Decree on the subject from Joseph II., dated February 20, 1782; they endeavored to have it enacted that all employed in public offices should be bound to join in a league to destroy the "Jesuitical Devotion," as they styled it, that all pictures of the Sacred Heart should be removed from Churches, and that the public Academic Professors should ridicule in every way the Devotion. The Feast of the Sacred Heart was expunged from every calendar, its Confraternities were abolished, and in Vienna persons convicted of having taken means to promote the Devotion were heavily fined and even imprisoned.

These attempts, however, were all in vain. The Devotion to the Sacred Heart had taken

too deep a root in the hearts of the Faithful to be eradicated. They had recourse to it in their difficulties, and consecrated themselves publicly to it. The Tyrolese especially obtained permission by imperial Decree to celebrate the Feast every year in their churches with unusual splendor. Others followed their example, and in 1856 the Austrian dominions formed no exception to what was said by the Sacred Congregation of Rites of the whole Catholic world, that "at that time there was hardly a single diocese which had not received with joy from the Apostolic See the privilege of celebrating the Feast."

It remains to say a few words respecting the true nature and distinctive character of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, as far as it can be gathered from the language of the Church in the approbation of the Feast.

The Object, then, of the Devotion, appears to be twofold, the one spiritual, the other material or sensible. The spiritual Object is the infinite charity of our Divine Lord; the material or sensible Object is His true and real Heart, Which is at the same time the Symbol of His infinite charity. Both are truly the Object of the Devotion, but the spiritual is the primary Object; the material, though worthy of infinite honor on account of Its hypostatic union with the Eternal Word, takes Its place as an Object of the Feast on account of Its natural connection with the

spiritual Object or the infinite charity of our Divine Lord.

Such is the language of Pope Pius VI., in his Letter to Scipio de Ricci, Bishop of Pistoia, dated June 30, 1781. "The substance of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus consists in calling to mind and venerating the unbounded charity and excessive love of our Divine Redeemer under the symbol of His Heart."

"The principal Object of this Devotion," said the Postulator of the Cause under Pope Innocent XII., "is the unbounded love of the Son of God."

"The immediate Object in other devotions," argued Father Galliffet, when Postulator of the Cause under Benedict XIII., "as, for example, of the Passion, the Wounds, &c., is not properly the love of Christ; but in the Feast of the Heart of Jesus, the love with which the Sacred Heart is inflamed is the immediate Object of the Feast, yet not apart from the Heart Itself."

The same is also established in the disputation held by the Apostolic Master of Ceremonies before the Sacred Congregation, on the 11th of August, 1860. Speaking of the points of difference between the Feast of Corpus Christi and that of the Sacred Heart, "Though both," he says, "are Feasts of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet they commemorate different mysteries. The one regards the real presence of the Body of

Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar, the other the mystery of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ symbolically expressed by His material Heart." He shows, also, that the Devotion to the Sacred Heart regards especially the Passion and Death of our Divine Lord as proofs of His infinite love, and that they are distinctly commemorated in the Mass and Office for the Feast.*

As the Advocates of the Cause have always held this language, so the Sovereign Pontiffs in their grants have always set before the Faithful the love of our Divine Lord as the primary Object of the Devotion, and urged them to respond to this love by their devotion to His Sacred Heart.

Thus Clement XIII., when he granted permission for the Feast, expressed his wish that the Faithful, in celebrating the Feast, should "call to mind the principal benefits received from His charity,"† that charity which He showed especially "in taking our nature, in suffering and dying for the redemption of mankind, and in instituting, in commemoration of His Death, the Sacrament of His Body and Blood."‡

* In the Invitatory: "Christum pro nobis passum venite adoremus;" and in the Response at Prime: "Qui passus es pro nobis," and also in the Preface, which is that of the Cross.

† "Præcipua ejus charitatis beneficia recolerent."

‡ Decree, Feb. 11, 1765.

So also Pius VI., in three Briefs which are contained in the *Bullarium Romanum*, declared that he wished, in extending the Feast, "that the remembrance and veneration of the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ, endured with so great love for the redemption of mankind, might be daily increased, and that the Faithful might entertain greater devotion and love for the Passion of our Lord." In his Letter, also, to the Bishop of Pistoia, as we have seen, he says that the substance of the Devotion consists in the thought and veneration of the unbounded love of our Divine Redeemer under the symbol of His Sacred Heart.

The same also is the language of Pope Pius VII. But we find no clearer proofs than in the language of his present Holiness Pius IX. Thus, in the Decree of the 23d of August, 1856, he declares that he had extended the Feast to the whole Church because "he wished to give fresh incitement to the Faithful to love, make a return of love, and embrace His wounded Heart, Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His Blood." And again, in the words of the Decree of the Beatification of Blessed Margaret Mary, it is declared that this was the object of the institution of the Devotion—"In order that He might the more enkindle this fire of charity, He wished that the veneration and worship of

His most Sacred Heart should be established and promoted in His Church."

In the Roman breviary, in the Office for Blessed Margaret Mary, we are presented with an account of the apparition of our Blessed Lord to her, in which He showed her His Sacred Heart in His open Breast, burning with flames and encircled with thorns, and enjoined her, "in return for His love and to repair the injuries and ingratitude of men, to procure the establishment of a Feast in honor of His Heart."

It is thus we see that the Sovereign Pontiffs in general in their Constitutions are at pains to set before the Faithful the infinite love of God as the principal Object of the Devotion, in order to enkindle in their hearts a greater love of Jesus Christ; and our Holy Father, his present Holiness, in granting the Beatification of Blessed Margaret Mary, has proposed in her an example to show how our Lord may be loved, and a model, also, by which the Faithful might form themselves in this school of divine love.

The material or sensible Object of the Devotion is the true and living Heart of our Lord. This we learn, says Father Galliffet, in the work which he presented to His Holiness Pope Benedict XIII., from the words of the revelation in which our Divine Lord Himself, in establishing the Devotion, made known His will to Blessed

Margaret Mary. Disclosing to her His Sacred Heart, "See this Heart," He said, "Which burns with such love for men that It has omitted nothing, even to exhausting and consuming Itself, to show to them Its love." "It is evident, then," says Father Galliffet, "that our Lord here speaks of His Heart, not in a figurative, but in a true and real sense, as It is a part of His Sacred Body." The same, also, is the line of argument advanced by the Postulator of the Cause under Pope Clement XIII.

The reason why the Sacred Heart should have been proposed as an Object, had been given by the Postulator of the Cause, in 1697, under Pope Innocent XII., drawn from the necessity felt by our nature for some sensible object in the exercise of devotion ; nor could any more suitable object be found to awaken divine love in our hearts than the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord.

It was declared by Pope Pius VI., against the Jansenists, in his Bull *Auctorem Fidei*, that the true and real physical Heart of our Divine Lord is an Object of this Devotion, united inseparably to the Person of the Eternal Word.

The infinite dignity, also, of this material Object is at the same time established by this Bull, wherein it is declared that "the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to be adored with supreme worship, as it is the Heart of Jesus, that is to say, the Heart of the Person of the Word, to Which It

is inseparably united." It is, also, most suited, as has been said, to enkindle a love of our Lord, as It is, at the same, a Symbol of His infinite love.

The sensible Object in this, as in all other devotions, gives its name to the Feast. In the Feast of Corpus Christi, it is the ineffable Mystery of the Blessed Sacrament which constitutes the spiritual Object ; the sensible Object is the Sacred Body of our Blessed Lord, and it is from this that it takes its name of the Feast of Corpus Christi. In the Feast of the Sacred Heart, it is the infinite charity of our Divine Lord towards ungrateful man which is the spiritual Object ; the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord, the Symbol of His love, is the sensible Object, and it is from this that the Feast is called the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

From the consideration of this twofold Object flow naturally those exercises of love which go to constitute in general the end of the Devotion. The thought of the infinite love of our Divine Lord gives rise to the desire to make a return of love ; the sight of the Sacred Heart of our Lord, so infinite in dignity and overflowing with all perfections, awakens a desire to render It every homage ; and the reflection that this infinite love has met with such a return arouses a feeling of grief and sorrow, and a desire to make reparation for such injuries,

especially as regards the Sacrament of Love, the Blessed Eucharist. We are presented by the Church with an example of the exercise of this perfect love in the model which it has proposed to us in the life of Blessed Margaret Mary.



APPENDIX.



DECREE OF BEATIFICATION.

PIUS IX. POPE.

FOR THE PERPETUAL MEMORY OF THE THING.

JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith, Who, led by His exceeding charity, having taken upon Himself the weakness of our mortal nature, offered Himself unspotted unto God upon the altar of the Cross, in order to free us from the most hateful slavery of sin, desired nothing so much as to enkindle, by every means, in the souls of men, that charity with which His Heart was consumed, as we know from the Gospel He declared to His Disciples—"I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?"

In order the more to enkindle this fire of charity, He would have the adoration and worship of His most Sacred Heart established and propagated in the Church. For who, indeed, is there so hard-hearted and unfeeling as not to be moved to make a return of love to that amiable Heart Which was pierced and wounded with the lance, in order that our souls might find therein a hiding-place as it were, and secure retreat, to which

we might betake ourselves in safety from the attacks and snares of our enemies? Who would not be provoked to show every mark of love and honor to that most Sacred Heart, from the Wound of Which flowed forth water and blood, the source of our life and salvation?

In order to establish and spread far and wide amongst mankind this so saving a Devotion, and one so justly due from us, our Saviour vouchsafed to choose His servant, the Venerable Margaret Mary de Alacoque, a Religious of the Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who by her innocence of life and constant practice of every virtue, proved herself worthy, with the aid of divine grace, of this exalted office and charge.

Born of a good family in the town of Lauthecourt, in the diocese of Autun, in France, she manifested from her very infancy a docility, regularity, and gravity beyond her years, so as to give her parents unmistakable tokens of what she would be in after life. When still quite a child, she showed a distaste for all the little gratifications which are so commonly attractive to children, and repaired to the more retired rooms of the house, where she might with her whole soul worship and adore God. As she grew older, she shunned the company of others, and delighted in nothing so much as in constantly visiting churches, and there prolonging her prayers for several hours. She consecrated her virginity to God from her tender years, and began to afflict her body with fasts, disciplines, and other austerities, that she might thus hedge in, as it were, with thorns, and guard the flower of her virginity.

She presented also a striking example of meekness

and humility. For, when her father was dead, and her mother worn out by age and severe sickness, she was treated with such harshness and severity by those who had care of the house, as often to want even what was necessary for food and clothing. Yet she bore meekly this cruelty and injustice for several years, setting before her eyes the example of the sufferings of Christ.

When she was nine years of age she approached the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist for the first time, and drew from this heavenly banquet such an ardent charity that the divine fire shone forth from her countenance and eyes.

Inflamed with a like charity towards her neighbor, she deeply grieved at the sad state of so many children, who were almost abandoned by their parents, and were growing up in vice and ignorance of what regarded their eternal salvation ; she accordingly instructed them with much patience in the mysteries of faith, trained them to virtue, and was even wont to deprive herself of a considerable portion of her daily sustenance to feed them.

Having chosen for herself a Heavenly Spouse, she steadfastly refused her mother's offer of the hand of a person of wealth and distinction ; and the better to ensure her fidelity, which she had pledged to her Heavenly Spouse, she thought of entering an Order of cloistered Nuns. After having weighed the matter long and seriously with herself, and consulted the divine will with earnest prayer, she was admitted, in the twenty-third year of her age, among the Sisters of the Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the town of Paray-le-Monial, in the diocese of Autun.

Having shown herself in her Noviceship such as her excellent disposition for virtue and the innocence of her past life had betokened, she deserved to be admitted to pronounce her solemn vows. After pronouncing them, she appeared now to press forward with redoubled speed towards the perfection of Religious life, so bright a pattern of all virtues did she exhibit to her Sisters in Religion. There shone forth in her a wonderful humility, an extraordinary readiness in obeying, and patience in enduring troubles of every kind, a most exact observance of even the least Rules, a constant severity in afflicting her body, uninterrupted prayer, to which whilst she devoted herself day and night, rapt often in ecstasy, the gifts of divine grace were most plenteously showered upon her. In meditating on the sufferings of Christ our Lord, she was penetrated with sentiments of such deep compassion, and inflamed with so ardent a love, that she commonly appeared to be almost in a swoon.

In course of time, when by her distinguished virtue she had gained the admiration of all her Sisters, she was placed over the young persons who were engaged in their Noviceship, that she might train and form them to Religious life; and for this office no one could have been found better suited than the Venerable Margaret Mary, since by her own example she animated and encouraged the young maidens entrusted to her care and guidance to enter upon and run on in the way of perfection.

It was now as she was praying with fervor before the august Sacrament of the Eucharist, that Christ our Lord

intimated to her that it would be most pleasing to Him if the worship of His most Sacred Heart, burning with love for mankind, were established, and He wished the charge of this to be consigned to her. The humility of the Venerable Servant of God was greatly alarmed, as she deemed herself unworthy of such an office ; nevertheless, that she might comply with the will of Heaven and satisfy her desire of enkindling divine love in the hearts of men, she earnestly exerted herself both amongst the Religious of her own convent, and also, as far as she could, amongst all in general, to induce them to show every mark of honor, worship, and reverence towards the most Sacred Heart, the seat of divine charity.

Many and severe were the troubles which the Venerable Servant of God had, on this account, to endure, and very many difficulties to surmount ; she never, however, lost courage ; and, relying on the hope of the assistance of Heaven, she applied herself with such labor and perseverance to promote this Devotion, that by the favor of divine grace it has increased and spread far and wide throughout the Church, with great fruit to souls.

At length, desiring to be dissolved, that she might take flight to the heavenly nuptials of the Lamb, for which she so earnestly sighed, and wasted, not so much by disease as by the fire of charity, she departed this life on the 17th of October, in the year 1690.

The opinion which had prevailed of the Venerable Margaret Mary's sanctity became more general after her death, especially when confirmed by repeated miracles which were said to have been wrought through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God. In conse-

quence, in the year 1715, the Bishop of Autun lost no time in procuring documents relating to her life and virtues, to be drawn up in the usual form. But the serious political disturbances, which shook nearly the whole of Europe at the close of the eighteenth century, prevented the Cause from being carried before the Holy See. As soon, however, as the furious civil tempest was calmed, petition was made for the decision of the Apostolic See, and an inquiry into the virtues by which the Venerable Margaret Mary had been distinguished, in the Assembly of the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, presiding over the Congregation of Rites. After all the circumstances had been long and carefully weighed, We at length declared by a Decree, published on the 23d of August, in the year 1866, that they had reached a heroic degree.

Afterwards in the Assembly of Cardinals was proposed a discussion concerning the miracles by which the sanctity of the Venerable Margaret was said to have been confirmed by Heaven, and when, after a rigorous examination, they had been approved of both by the Consultors and the Cardinals, We, having first implored the aid of divine light, pronounced an affirmative sentence regarding the truth of the same miracles, on the 24th day of April of the present year, 1864.

It only remained that the same Cardinals should be asked whether it were safe to proceed to the solemn Beatification of the Venerable Margaret, and, being assembled in Our presence on the 14th of June of the present year, they answered with one voice that it was safe to proceed.

We, accordingly, having implored the divine assistance, as was fitting in a matter of such importance, decreed, on the 24th of June in the same year, that since it seemed good to Us, the honors of the Blessed, with all the usual privileges, might safely be paid to the Venerable Servant of God, until such time as her Canonization should be solemnized.

We, therefore, moved by the prayers of nearly all the Bishops of France, as also by those of the Religious of the Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the counsel and assent of Our Venerable Brethren, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, presiding over the Congregation of Rites, grant permission by Our Apostolic Authority that the same Venerable Servant of God, Margaret Mary de Alacoque, be styled in future by the name of Blessed, and that her body and relics be presented to the veneration of the Faithful, so that they be not carried in solemn processions ; moreover, by the same Our Authority, we grant that the Office and Mass of the Common of Virgins, with proper prayers approved by Us, according to the rubrics of the Roman missal and breviary, be said in her honor. But we only allow the celebration of Mass and recitation of Office on the 17th of October, in the diocese of Autun, and in all the churches throughout the world belonging to those Houses in which the Religious Order of Nuns of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is found instituted. The aforesaid permission extends to all the Faithful, secular and regular, who are bound to the recitation of the Canonical Hours, and, as regards Masses, to all Priests that resort to churches in which the Feast is

celebrated. In fine, We grant that within the first year after the date of these present letters, the solemnity of the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God, Margaret Mary de Alacoque, be celebrated in the dioceses and churches above mentioned with Office and Masses with the rank of a greater double ; and We order this celebration to take place on a day to be appointed by the Ordinaries, after the same solemnity has been celebrated in the Vatican Basilica. Any Apostolical Constitutions and Ordinations whatsoever, and any other documents to the contrary notwithstanding.

We will, moreover, that the same regard be paid to the printed copies also of these Letters, provided they be signed by the hand of the Secretary of the aforesaid Congregation of Sacred Rites, and confirmed by the seal of the Prefect, as would be paid to the manifestation of Our will expressed by these present Letters.

Given at Castel Gandolpho, under the Seal of the Fisherman, on the 29th day of the month of August, in the year 1864, the nineteenth year of Our Pontificate.

N. CARD. PARACCIANI ~~CLARELL~~

PIUS PP. IX.

AD PERPETUAM REI MEMORIAM.

AUCTOR nostrae fidei et consummator Jesus, qui nimia ductus charitate, naturae mortalis infirmitate assumpta, obtulit se in ara Crucis immaculatum Deo, ut nos a peccati teterrima servitute liberaret, nihil potius habuit, quam ut flammam charitatis, qua Cor Ejus ureretur, in hominum animis modis omnibus excitaret, quemadmodum suis adseruisse discipulis novimus ex Evangelio “ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?” Hunc vero charitatis ignem ut magis incenderet, sanctissimi Sui Cordis venerationem cultumque institui in Ecclesia voluit, ac promoveri. Ecquis enim tam durus ac ferreus sit quin moveatur ad redamandum Cor illud suavissimum idcirco transfixum ac vulneratum lancea, ut animus ibi noster quoddam quasi latibulum, ac perfugium habeat, quo se ab hostium incursione insidiisque recipiat, ac tueatur? Ecquis non provocetur ad prosequendum omni observantiae studio Cor illud sacratissimum, cujus ex vulnere aqua, et sanguis, fons scilicet nostrae vitae, ac salutis effluxit? Jamvero ad tam salutarem, ac debitum pietatis cultum instituendum, lateque inter homines propagandum eligere Servator Noster dignatus est Venerabilem Famulam suam Margaritam Mariam de Alacoque religiosam sororem ex ordine Visitationis Beatae Mariae Virginis, quae quidem et innocentia vitae et assidua virtutum omnium exercitatione tanto officio ac muneri, divina adjuvante gratia se dignam probavit. Haec enim vero in oppido,

cui nomen *Lauthecourt*, intra fines Dioecesis *Augustodunensis* in Gallia honesto genere orta jam inde a pueritia ingenium docile prae se tulit, moresque probos, et supra aetatem compositos, sic ut qualis esset futura, certis indiciis parentes ominarentur. Etenim adhuc puella ab oblectamentis, quibus illa aetatula capi solet, abhorrens, secretiora petebat domus cubicula, ubi intenta mente Deum coleret ac veneraretur, adolescentior autem frequentiam hominum devitans nihil magis habebat in deliciis, quam versari in templis assidue, precesque ad plures horas producere. Virginitatem emisso voto primis ab annis Deo consecravit, atque adeo jejuniis, flagellis, aliisque asperitatibus adfligere corpus instituit, ut iisdem quibusdam quasi spinis virginitatis florem septum custodiret. Mansuetudinis porro, atque humilitatis illustre documentum exhibuit. Etenim demortuo patre, matre vero tum aetate, tum gravi morbo confecta, ab iis, qui rei domesticae curationem gerebant, sic dure atque aspere habita est, ut rebus etiam ad victum cultumque necessariis plerumque careret. Atqui tantam inclementiam atque injuriam, proposito sibi Christi patientis exemplo, complures annos aequo animo tulit. Novem annos nata ad Sanctissimum Eucharistiae Sacramentum suscipiendum primum accessit, acque ex coelesti dape tantum concepit charitatis ardorem, ut ignis ille divinus ex ejus ore, acque oculis emicaret. Pari erga proximum charitate incensa, graviter dolebat miseram puerorum turbam fere a parentibus derelictam vitiis succrescere rerum ad salutem aeternam pertinentium ignaram, idcirco eos patienter erudiebat mysteriis fidei, ad virtutem informabat, et vero etiam non modi-

cam quotidiani cibatus partem eisdem alendis detrahare sibi consueverat. Quum caelestem sibi Sponsum delegisset, exhibitas a matre nuptias licet opulentas atque illustres constanter recusavit, et quo datam coelesti eidem sponso fidem praestaret securius, de ingrediendo sacrum virginum clauastro cogitavit. Qua de re posteaquam diu multumque secum deliberasset, fuisque precibus Divinam consulisset voluntatem, annum agens aetatis suae vicesimum tertium, in civitate, cui nomen Paray le Monial, intra fines Augustodunensis Dioecesis religiosis sororibus ex Ordine Visitationis Beatae Mariae Virginis adscita est. In tyrocinio quum se talem probasset, qualem et egregia ad virtutem indoles, et innocenter acta vita portenderat, ad solemnia nuncupanda vota admitti promeruit. Quibus quidem nuncupatis videri coepit ad religiosae disciplinae perfectionem concitato cursu contendere; adeo sodalibus suis Deo dicatis virtutum omnium exemplar enituit. Mira quippe in ipsa elucebat humilitas, singularis et in obtemperando alacritas, et in quibusvis molestiis perferendis patientia, accuratissima legum vel minimarum observantia, in afflictando corpore assidua austeritas, numquam intermissum precationis studium, cui dies noctesque quum instaret, alienato saepe a sensibus animo, divinae gratiae donis uberrime perfundebatur. In recolendis autem Christi Domini cruciatibus tanto afficiebatur doloris sensu, tantaque inardescebat amoris flamma, ut prope exanimis plerumque languesceret. Porro quum ob virtutis praestantiam omnium sibi sodalium admirationem conciliasset, puellis, quae in tyrocinio versarentur, ad religiosam vitam exercendis, informandisque

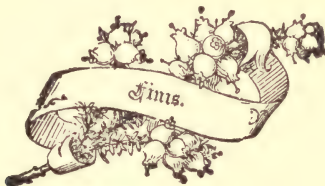
praeposita fuit, eique muneri nulla potuisset aptior inveniri, quam Venerabilis Margarita Maria, utpote quae commissas suae fidei ac magisterio puellas ad ingrediendum atque excurrendum perfectionis iter erigeret, ac confirmaret exemplo suo. Jam vero ante augustissimum Eucharistiae Sacramentum eidem fervidius oranti significatum est a Christo Domino, gratis-simum sibi fore si cultus institueretur sacratissimi Sui Cordis humanum erga genus charitatis igne flagrantis, ac velle Se hujus rei curam ipsi demandatam. Qua erat humilitate cohorrui Venerabilis Dei Famula, tanto se officio indignam existimans; sed tamen ut supernae obsequeretur voluntati, utque desiderio suo faceret satis divinum amorem in hominum animis excitandi, studiose egit tum apud religiosas sui Coenobii sorores, tum vero etiam apud omnes, quoad potuit, homines, ut Cor illud Sanctissimum divinae charitatis sedem omni honoris significatione colerent ac venerarentur. Multae idcirco et graves Venerabili Dei Famulae tolerandae fuerunt molestiae, plurimae superandae difficultates, numquam tamen ipsa dejecit animum, et spe subnixa coelestis auxilii tam operose ac constanter promovere institit id genus pietatis, ut divina favente gratia, non sine magno animarum fructu in Ecclesia auctum longe sit ac propagatum. Denique dissolvi cupiens, ut ad coelestes agni nuptias, quas tantopere deperibat, advolaret, non tam morbo, quam flamma charitatis absumpta diem obiit supremum decimo sexto kalendas Novembris Anno MDCLXXX. Quae de Venerabilis Margaritae Mariae sanctitate invaluerat opinio percrebuit magis postquam ipsa e vivis excessit, accedente praesertim prodigiorum celebritate,

quae Venerabili Dei Famula deprecante ferebantur contigisse. Quapropter anno MDCCXV. Augustodunensis Antistes de illius vita et moribus opportunas de more tabulas condendas curavit. Verumtamen ne ad Sanctae Sedis iudicium deferri causa posset gravissimi rerum publicarum motus effecerunt, qui exeunte saeculo decimo octavo universam fere Europam perturbarunt. Sedata tamen turbulentissima procella temporum postulatum est Apostolicae Sedis iudicium, et apud Consilium S. R. Ecclesiae Cardinalium sacris ritibus tuendis praepositorum instituta de virtutibus quaestione, quibus Venerabilis Margarita inclaruisset, rebus omnibus diu multumque ponderatis, Nos tandem heroicum illas attigisse gradum ediximus decreto evulgato decimo kalendas Septembris Anno MDCCCXLVI. Exinde in eodem Cardinalium Consilio proposita disceptatio est de miraculis, quibus Venerabilis Margaritae sanctitas comprobata divinitus diceretur, ac postquam severo habito examine tum a Consultoribus, tum a Cardinalibus illa fuissent probata, Nos implorato antea superni luminis auxilio, de eorundem miraculorum veritate affirmativam evulgavimus sententiam die octavo kalendas Majas anni vertentis MDCCCLXIV. Illud unum supererat, ut iidem interrogarentur Cardinales num procedi tuto posset ad Beatorum Coelitum honores Venerabili Margaritae tribuendos, iidemque coram Nobis coacti decimo octavo kalendas Julii vertentis anni procedi tuto posse unanimi suffragio responderunt. Nos porro, ut in tanta re, coelestem opem adprecati die octavo kalendas Julii Anni ejusdem decrevimus deferri tuto posse, quum Nobis visum esset, Venerabili Servae Dei Beatorum honores cum

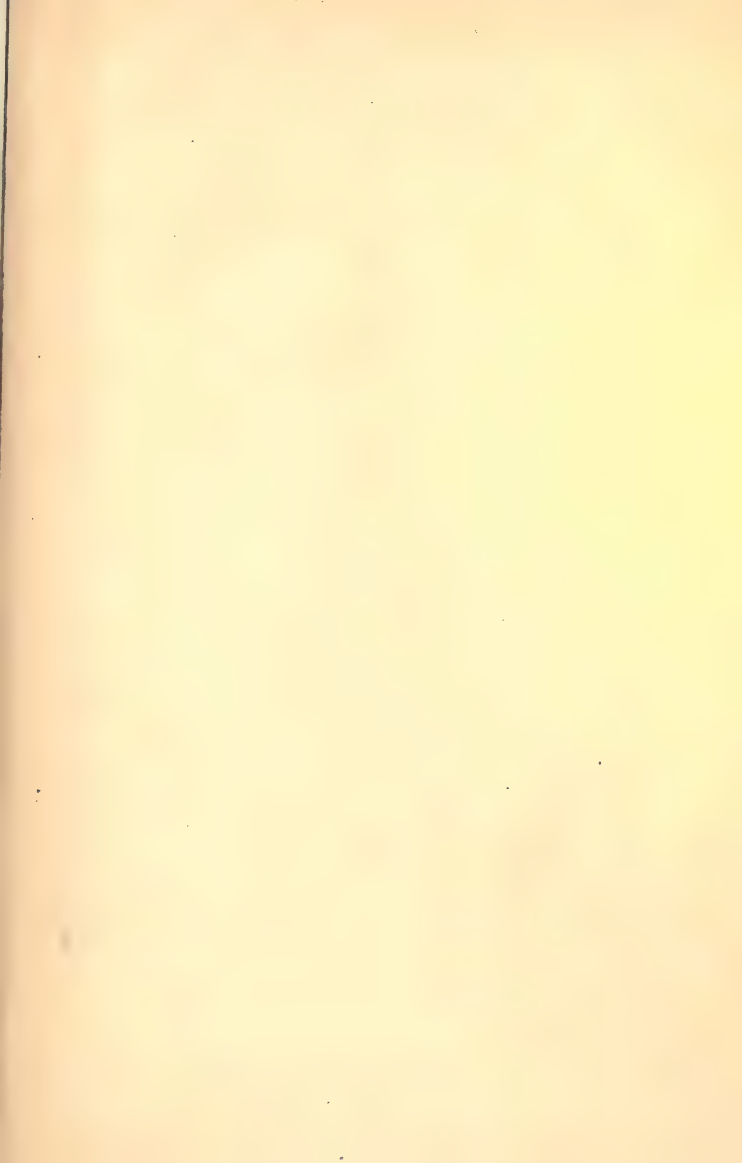
omnibus indultis, donec sollemnis Ejusdem canonizatio celebretur. Nos igitur permoti precibus omnium ferme Sacrorum Galliae Antistitum, nec non religiosorum sororum Ordinis Visitationis B. Mariae Virginis, de consilio et assensu Venerabilium Fratrum Nostrorum S. R. Ecclesiae Cardinalium sacris ritibus cognoscendis praepositorum auctoritate Nostra Apostolica facultatem impertimur ut eadem Venerabilis Dei Famula Margarita Maria de Alacoque Beatae nomine in posterum nuncupetur, ejusque corpus et reliquiae, non tamen in sollemnibus supplicationibus deferendae, publicae fidelium venerationi proponantur. Praeterea eadem auctoritate concedimus, ut de illa recitetur officium et missa de communi Virginum cum orationibus propriis a Nobis approbatis juxta rubricas missalis et breviarii Romani. Ejusmodi vero missae celebrationem, et officii recitationem fieri dumtaxat concedimus in Dioecesi Augustodunensi, ac in templis omnibus domorum ubicumque existentium, in quibus institutus reperitur religiosus ordo monialium Visitationis B. Mariae Virginis, die XVII Octobris ab omnibus christifidelibus tam saecularibus, quam regularibus, qui horas canonicas recitare teneantur, et quantum ad missas attinet ab omnibus Sacerdotibus ad templa, in quibus festum celebratur, confluentibus. Denique concedimus, ut anno a datis hisce Litteris primo Solemnia beatificationis Venerabilis Servae Dei Margaritae Mariae de Alacoque in Dioecesi, atque in Templis, de quibus habita mentio est, celebrentur cum officio, et missis duplicis majoris ritus, idque fieri praecipimus die per Ordinarios indicenda, ac posteaquam eadem solemnia in Basilica Vaticana celebrata sint. Non obstantibus Con-

stitutionibus, et Ordinationibus Apostolicis, ceterisque contrariis quibuscumque. Volumus autem ut harum Litterarum exemplis etiam impressis, dummodo manu Secretarii praedictae Congregationis sacrorum rituum subscripta sint, et sigillo Praefecti munita, eadem prorsus fides habeatur, quae Nostrae voluntatis significationi hisce ostensis Litteris haberetur. Datum ex Arce Gandulphi sub Annulo Piscatoris die XIX Mensis Augusti Anno MDCCCLXIV. Pontificatus Nostri Anno Decimonono.

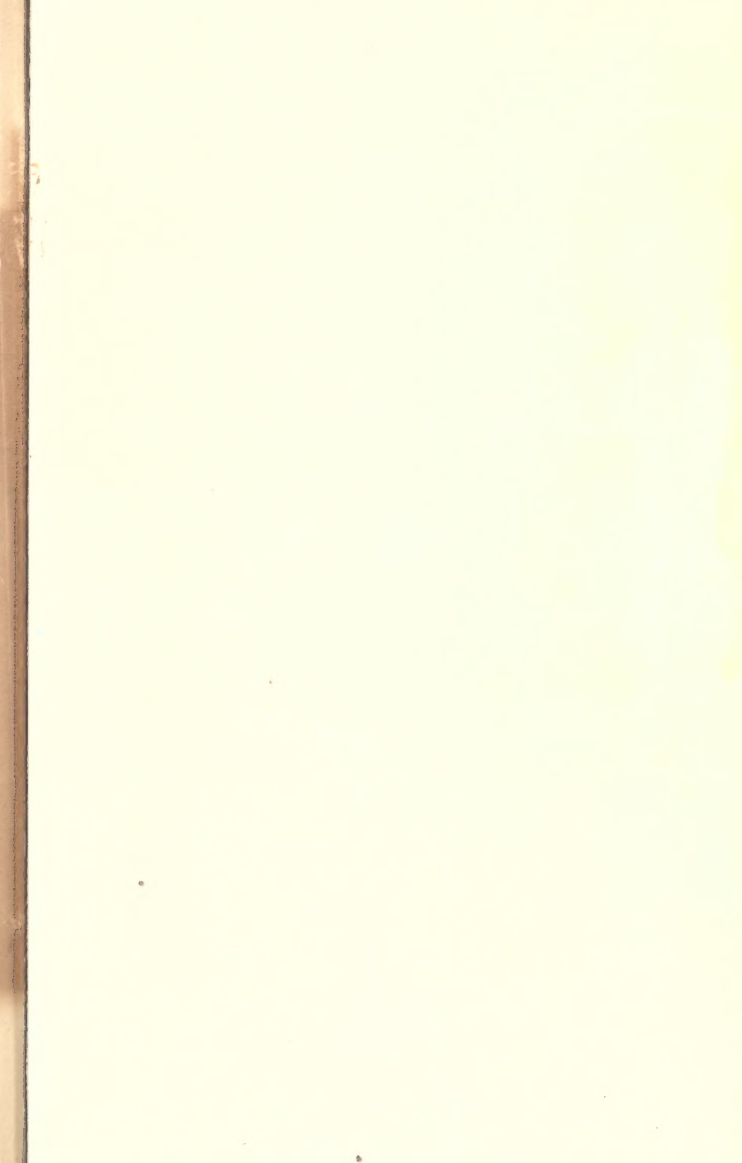
N. CARD. PARACCIANI CLARELLI











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